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PREFACE.

It will gratify the readers of these volumes to find that the Memoir is chiefly compiled from Mr. Foster's Letters; so numerous, happily, are the references to himself and the subjects in which he took the deepest interest, that little more than a proper selection and arrangement has been requisite, in order to form them into a continuous narrative. A biography drawn from such sources will be found, probably, to present a more vivid and truthful exhibition of character, than even a record by a self-observer, however faithfully intended, if composed after the lapse of years, when the events, and the emotions they called forth, have begun to fade upon the memory.

The sentiments of affectionate veneration, cherished from early years towards the subject of this Memoir, would preclude on the part of the Editor, even were his abilities equal to the task, any attempt at a critical analysis of character. What he has aimed at accomplishing has been, to select from the materials placed at his disposal, whatever would best illustrate the intellectual and moral qualities,

the principles, and opinions, of so distinguished a man. He has not consciously allowed the representation to be moulded into a conformity to his own views or convictions, either by omission on the one hand, or on the other by giving greater prominence to any class of sentiments than the place they occupied in Mr. Foster's estimation would justify. In a life so retired, and for the most part devoid of incident, a recurrence of similar trains of thought might be expected. For this reason many passages in the correspondence have been omitted, which individually would have been as worthy of preservation as those that are retained ; if still something like reiteration should be found, the Editor trusts that it is not to an immoderate extent, not to say that, within certain limits, it will serve to show more distinctly the writer's mental habits,—what were his most accustomed channels of thought.

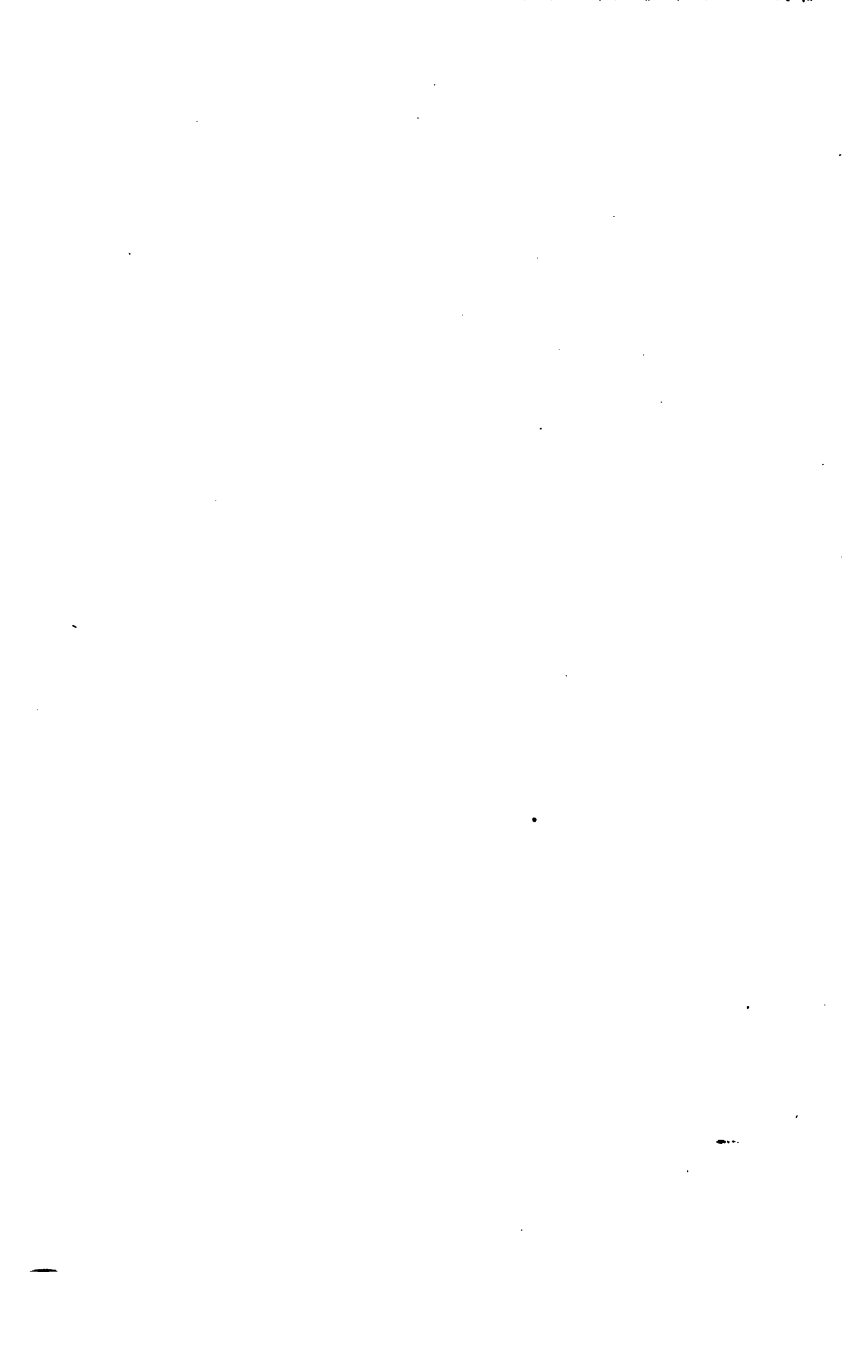
For the particulars relating to Mr. Foster's youth, the Editor is indebted to his only surviving friend of that period, Mr. Horsfall, and to the descendants of his tutor, Dr. Fawcett. Use also has been made of a paper in Mr. Foster's handwriting—" Hints and Questions respecting my early History :"—unfortunately, it is very brief, and breaks off abruptly.

In two instances the Editor has deviated from his first intention of inserting nothing in these volumes which had been already published by the Author, namely, the Letters on the Church, and those on the Ballot ; he was led to do so from the consideration, that these productions, having only appeared in a public journal upwards of ten years ago,

must be new to many readers—that they contain Mr. Foster's deliberate sentiments on subjects of great social interest—and that the miscellaneous character of the correspondence seemed to render their insertion in it more suitable than a republication with any of his other works.

In conclusion, the Editor's warmest thanks are presented to those friends of Mr. Foster (or their representatives) to whom the letters in these volumes are addressed. His acknowledgments are especially due to Mr. Cottle for the memoir of Miss Saunders with the accompanying letters, and for the introductory notice of his interesting and lamented relative. He would also express his obligations to the President of Cheshunt College for permission to insert the long and valuable letter on missionary undertakings, and for the observations on some passages, written, as might be anticipated, in a spirit of respectful and candid criticism.

Northampton, May 15, 1846.



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MEMOIR.

CHAPTER I.

PARENTAGE AND BIRTH—EARLY CHARACTER AND OCCUPATIONS—BREARLEY HALL—BRISTOL.

1770—1792.

JOHN and ANN FOSTER, the parents of the subject of this memoir, occupied, at the time of his birth, a small farm-house in the parish of Halifax, between Wainsgate and Hebden-bridge.* In addition to the labours of the farm, they devoted part of their time to weaving. Mr. Foster was a strong-minded man, and so addicted to reading and meditation, that on this account principally, he deferred involving himself in the cares of a family till upwards of forty. He received his permanent convictions of Christian truth from that model of apostolic zeal, Mr. Grimshaw,† of Haworth; but subsequently joined a small Baptist church at Wainsgate. Though a person of retired habits,‡ and averse from mixing

* The name of the locality, which frequently occurs in the correspondence, was Wadsworth Lanes; the latter term is intended to describe a township road, in which a considerable number of other roads or lanes meet.

† A curious anecdote respecting this remarkable man is given by Mr. Foster in his Review of Dr. Fawcett's Life, in the Eclectic Review, Aug. 1819, or *Contributions*, vol. i. p. 504.

‡ A secluded spot at the bottom of a wood near Hebden-bridge, and adjoining the river Hebden, with a projecting rock, whither the good man used to retire for prayer and meditation, is still known by the name of *John Foster's cave*.

in society further than a sense of duty required, he possessed great cheerfulness and enlarged views. "I remember," a valued correspondent observes, "seeing him in company with a dear relative, at the time when the British and Foreign Bible Society was first formed, and it is impossible for me to forget the devout exhilaration of the venerable Christian as he conversed on the subject, and indulged in bright visions of hope in reference to the world he was leaving." His acquaintance with theological writers was extensive. His conversation was generally full of instruction, and showed an acute and discriminating mind. In the society of which he was so valuable a member, he took a leading part; and on the decease of their pastor, read at their meetings every alternate Sunday, "Gurnal's Christian Armour." It is said that when any passage struck him as peculiarly excellent, he would pause and express his approbation by exclaiming, "Author, I am of thy opinion." "That's sound divinity." In Mrs. Foster he found a partner of congenial taste, his superior in practical energy,* and his counterpart in soundness of understanding, integrity, and piety. They both lived to a very advanced age, but suffered much from bodily affliction during the latter part of their course. The following characteristic inscription was placed on Mr. Foster's tomb-stone, by his own desire: "John Foster exchanged this life for a better, March 21st, 1814, in the eighty-eighth year of his age, and the sixty-third after God had fully assured him that he was one of his sons." Mrs. Foster survived her husband nearly three years, and died December 19, 1816, in the eighty-third year of her age.

Their eldest son, JOHN FOSTER, was born September 17, 1770. When not twelve years old, he had (to use his own

* One day, before their marriage, Mr. Foster, in a desponding mood exclaimed, "I cannot keep a wife;" his betrothed promptly rejoined, "Then I will work and keep my husband."

words) a "painful sense of an awkward but entire individuality." This was apparent in his manners and language. His observations on characters and events resembled those of a person arrived at maturity, and obtained for him from the neighbours the appellation of "old fashioned." Thoughtful and silent, he shunned the companionship of boys whose vivacity was merely physical, and uninspired by sentiment. His natural tendency to reserve was increased by the want of juvenile associates at home; for his only brother, Thomas, was four years younger than himself, and they had no sisters. His parents, partly from the lateness of their marriage, had acquired habits of too fixed a gravity to admit of that confiding intercourse which is adapted to promote the healthy exercise of the affections. Had a freer interchange of feeling existed, it might have rendered less intense (though it could not have removed) that constitutional pensiveness of Foster's mind, which at times induced "a recoil from human beings into a cold interior retirement," where he felt as if "dissociated from the whole creation." But emotion and sentiment being thus repressed, his outward life was marked by a timidity that amounted to "infinite shyness." A very large proportion of his feelings were so much his own, that he either "felt precisely that they could not be communicated, or he did not feel that they could." His early antipathies were strong, but "not malicious." His associations were intensely vivid; he had, for instance, an insuperable dislike to a book, during the reading of which he had done anything that strongly excited self-reproach; or to whatever was connected with feelings of disgust and horror. For a number of years he would not sit on a stool which had belonged to a man who died in a sudden and strange way, and whose ghost was said to have appeared in a barn near his house. In short, his imagination was imperious and tyrannical, and would often haunt him

with a scene of Indian tortures, or the idea of a skeleton meeting him each night in a room he had to pass through to bed. "The time of going to bed was an awful season of each day." He was excited to strong emotion by reading passages in favourite authors, such as "Young's Night Thoughts." Even single words (as *chalcedony*), or the names of ancient heroes, had a mighty fascination over him, simply from their sound; and other words from their meaning, as *hermit*.*

His sensibility, though checked in its social operation, was kindled into intense activity by the contemplation of natural scenery, which in the neighbourhood was highly picturesque. The very words *woods* and *forests* would produce the most powerful emotion. In matters of taste the *great†* interested

* "I remember, for example, a person, very young indeed, who was so enchanted with the stories of Gregory Lopez, and one or two more pious hermits, as almost to form the resolution to betake himself to some wilderness, and live as Gregory did. At any time the word *hermit* was enough to transport him, like the witch's broomstick, to the solitary hut which was delightfully surrounded by shady, solemn groves, mossy rocks, crystal streams, and gardens of radishes. While the fancy lasted he forgot the most obvious of all facts, that man is not made for habitual solitude, nor can endure it without misery, except when turned into the superstitious ascetic."—*Essay on the Epithet Romantic, Letter 2.*

Of Gregory Lopez, his biographer, father Francis Losa, says, that "for the last six years of his life he never walked abroad, or took the wonted pleasures of solitude,—the prospect of a flowery field, a beautiful wood, a crystal stream, or so much as suffered himself to descend into a pleasant garden adjoining to the house he lived in."—*The Holy Life, Pilgrimage, and blessed Death of Gregory Lopez, a Spanish Hermit in the West Indies. The second edition, London, 1686.*

Mr. Foster remarks in a note to the passage quoted above from his Essays, that Gregory did not practise absolute solitude, but was frequently visited for advice in religious matters. His own juvenile predilections, however, led him to covet such solitude, and to retain the gratification of "the pleasant garden, and crystal stream."

† "The tendency to this species of romance may be caused, or may be greatly augmented, by an exclusive taste for what is *grand*, a disease to which some few minds are subject. All the images in their intellectual scene must be colossal and mountainous. They are constantly seeking what is animated into heroics, what is expanded into immensity, what is elevated above the stars. But for great empires, great battles, great enterprises, great convulsions, great geniuses, great rivers, great temples,

him more than the *beautiful*; great rocks, vast trees and forests, dreary caverns, volcanoes, cataracts, and tempests, were the objects of his highest enthusiasm: and in the same way, among the varieties of human character, the great and the heroic excited the deepest interest. An abhorrence of cruelty was among his earliest *habitual* feelings. He "abhorred spiders for killing flies, and abominated butchers," though at a very early age, on two occasions, his curiosity led him to a slaughter-house.

His behaviour towards his parents was uniformly dutiful;* and though his juvenile manifestations of affection were checked, from the causes already referred to, yet in mature life no one could give stronger proof of filial regard than he did, by contributing (in proportion to his means) very largely to the support and comfort of their declining years. He began early to assist them in weaving, and till his fourteenth year worked at spinning wool to a thread by the hand-wheel. In the three following years, he wove what are called double stuffs, such as lastings, &c. But while thus employed, he "had no idea of being permanently employed in handicraft;" he had the fullest persuasion that something else awaited him, not from the consciousness of superior abilities, but from indulging romantic wishes and plans. "I had when a child," was his affecting confession to Mr. Hughes, "the feelings of a foreigner in the place, and some of the earliest musings that kindled my passions were on plans for abandoning it. My heart felt a sickening vulgarity before my knowledge could

there would be nothing worth naming in this part of the creation."—*Essay on the Epithet Romantic, Letter 2.*

* "Qu. Whether my habit of obedience to my parents in early life did not lessen the general quality of independence and courage! Accustomed to submit from duty to them, I had more respect for other mature persons than I see children have; but to be unoppressed with respect or fear of grown persons in childhood, may probably contribute very much to the hardy independence, as well as insolence, of youth and manhood."—*MS. Journal, No. 782.*

make comparisons." "My involuntary, unreflecting perceptions of the mental character of my very few acquaintance, was probably just, as to their being qualified to reciprocate my sentiments and fancies." Thus, full of restless thoughts, wishes, and passions, on subjects that interested none of his acquaintance, it can excite no surprise that his weaving was often performed very indifferently, and that the master-manufacturer by whom he was employed was continually resolving that he would take no more of it. When Foster brought his piece into the "taking-in-room," as it is commonly called, he would turn his head aside, and submit with unequivocal repugnance to the ordeal of inspection. He laid his piece down, gave in a written paper stating the number of hanks in the piece, and the number at home, but on no occasion would he enter into conversation. The kind of weaving in which he was employed allowed no scope for invention, being a mere dull repetition of manual operations. Not that he ever showed any particular aptitude for mechanical contrivance. The only instance of the kind known was the construction of a terrestrial globe, when he was ten or eleven years old, on which the various countries were marked with a pen. It had no meridian; the frame was made of three pieces of wood, joined at the centre, the lower part of which served for feet. This self-imposed task was executed with a penknife, and was a long time in hand. He had also "a passion" for "making pictures with a pen."

While residing with his parents he studied closely, but irregularly; he would often shut himself up in the barn for a considerable time, and then come out and weave for two or three hours, "working," as an eye-witness expressed it, "like a horse." His attention during this period was necessarily confined to English literature, his home education not allowing a wider range. His father, however, was ambitious of a higher training for him, and when the lad

was only four years old, would lay his hand upon him and say, "This head would one day learn Greek." There was an excellent grammar-school at the neighbouring village of Heptonstall, conducted by a Mr. Shackleton; and we have no reason for supposing that the nonconformist principles of the Fosters operated on themselves, or on the master, to preclude their son from enjoying its advantages. Most probably, his assistance at the loom could not be dispensed with, and was incompatible with regular attendance at the school.

With much that was uncongenial and disadvantageous in Foster's circumstances, their moral and religious influences were for the most part highly salutary. In his parents he had constantly before him examples of fervent piety, combined with great sobriety of judgment and undeviating integrity. Their house also was the resort of their Christian neighbours for the purposes of social devotion, or to obtain the benefit of their advice in the perplexities of daily life. A meeting was held there every Tuesday evening, which was always closed with a prayer by Mr. Foster, who never omitted one petition—"O Lord, bless the lads!" meaning his son John, and his young (and at that time only) companion, Henry Horsfall. The earnestness with which these words were uttered made a deep impression on the two youths. To trace the progress of Foster's piety in its earliest stages, "mingled," as it was, "almost insensibly with his feelings," would be impracticable; its genuineness happily was proved by its "shining more and more unto the perfect day." When about fourteen years old, he communicated to the associate just named the poignant anxiety he had suffered from comparing his character with the requirements of the divine law, and added, that he had found relief only by placing a simple reliance on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for acceptance before God. Six days

after the completion of his seventeenth year,* he became a member of the Baptist church at Hebden-bridge. His venerable pastor Dr. Fawcett, and other friends who had watched with deep interest his early thoughtfulness and piety, urged him to dedicate his talents to the Christian ministry. Whether he had himself previously formed such a design or not, the object of their wishes soon became his deliberate choice, and after giving satisfactory proofs of his abilities, he was "set apart" for the ministerial office by a special religious service. For the purpose of receiving classical instruction and general mental improvement, he became shortly after an inmate at Brearley Hall, where Dr. Fawcett, in connexion with his labours as an instructor of youth, directed, at that time, the studies of a few theological candidates.† Part of each day was still spent in assisting his parents at their usual employments. During the rest of the time, his application to study was so intense as to excite apprehensions for his health. Frequently, whole nights were spent in reading and meditation, and on these occasions his favourite resort was a grove in Dr. Fawcett's garden. His scholastic exercises were marked by great labour, and accomplished very slowly. Many of his inferiors in mental power surpassed him in the readiness with which they performed the prescribed lessons. One method which he adopted for improving himself in composition, was that of taking paragraphs from different writers, and trying to remodel them, sentence by sentence, into as many forms of expression as he possibly could. His posture on these occasions was to sit with a hand on each knee, and, moving his body to and fro, he would remain silent for a considerable time, till his invention in shaping

* September 23, 1787.

† Among others, one of the illustrious missionary triumvirate at Serampore, WILLIAM WARD.

his materials had exhausted itself. This process he used to call *pumping*. He had a great aversion to certain forms of expression which were much in vogue among some religious people, and declared that if possible he would expunge them from every book by act of parliament; and often said, "We want to put a new face upon things."

At Dr. Fawcett's, Foster had access to a large and miscellaneous library. His course of reading, though extensive, was by no means indiscriminate; and it was observed that he invariably read his favourite authors with extreme care and attention. In general literature no class of books delighted him so much as voyages and travels; and the taste for this kind of reading, which so gratified his imaginative faculty and his love of the marvellous and romantic, never forsook him. In practical theology he was very partial to Watson's "Heaven taken by Storm," the work mentioned by Dr. Doddridge as having been read by Col. Gardiner on the evening of his memorable conversion.

Brearley Hall was environed with hanging woods, except on the south, where it opened by a gentle declivity to the valley. The scenery harmonized with Foster's temperament; and lonely rambles in the surrounding woodlands formed almost his only recreation. On one occasion he persuaded a young companion to walk with him by the river's side, from evening to dawn, just, as he said, that they might see how the light in its first approach affected the surrounding scenery.* Some years afterwards, when on a visit to his parents, he suddenly quitted the house, and started off in a heavy shower to look at a waterfall in the neighbourhood of which he had often heard, and on his return said, "I now understand the thing, and have got

* "One cannot well describe or even seize the precise steps of the gradation by which, after the sun is set, the evening changes into night. The appearances in the progress of morning are somewhat more palpable."
—*M.S. Misc. Observations*, 1805.

some ideas on the subject, with which I should not like to part."

"No one," an early friend remarks, "was better qualified to write on 'decision of character.' It was from early life the habitual characteristic of his mind. He formed his purposes, and then proceeded to execute them; nothing wavering. He was always examining every thing that came within the range of his observation, neither wind nor weather, night nor day, offered any obstacle; he accomplished his purpose."

In his sermons, not less than in his conversation, he constantly aimed at imparting freshness to ordinary topics, and generally succeeded. Yet it happened not unfrequently that his hearers were more startled and perplexed than edified. He once preached at Thornton, near Bradford, from the words, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." His object was to show the awful condition of the human race, had not a way of access been provided by God; but his novel mode of treating the subject led an old man (the oracle of his little circle) to remark, "I don't know what he has been driving at all this afternoon, unless to set riddles." "He is going to take us to the stars again," was a frequent observation of his hearers. Yet instances were not wanting in which his discourses made a salutary and indelible impression; two especially, one from the words, "And on his head were many crowns," the other on, "Doing the will of God from the heart," were long remembered.

He was very assiduous in visiting the cottages of the poor, particularly the sick and aged; on these occasions, besides religious conversation and prayer, he generally read the 145th Psalm.*

* "Prayer, and kindly intercourse with the poor, are the two great

After spending about three years at Brearley, application was made for his admission into the Baptist College, Bristol.* He entered that institution shortly after the decease of the president, Dr. Caleb Evans, a man deservedly held in high esteem among his connexions; the classical tutor, Robert Hall, ("clarum et memorabile nomen!") had just removed to Cambridge; but his place was ably filled by Joseph Hughes, the founder and secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society; he was only one year and eight months older than Foster; their minds were congenial, and the preceptor and the pupil were each soon merged in the friend. In piety, in mental activity, in ambition of intellectual superiority, in a deep shade of pensiveness, they resembled one another;† and if one possessed greater originality of thought and affluence of imagination, the other had received a more exact intellectual training, and attained a greater maturity of religious character and sentiment.

safeguards of spiritual life; more than food or raiment."—DR. ARNOLD, (*Life and Correspondence*, vol. ii. p. 58, fifth edit.)

* The recommendation to the managers of the institution was in the following terms:—

GENTLEMEN,—The bearer, Mr. John Foster, has been for some years in full communion with us; and, as far as we know, his conversation hath been conformable to his Christian profession. We apprehend the great Head of the church has bestowed upon him such gifts and abilities, as will, through his blessing, render him publicly useful. We, and several other churches in this neighbourhood, have had trial of his gifts; and, candid allowance being made for his youth, it is hoped he may, in due time, be an useful labourer in the Lord's vineyard. He wishes to devote a little more time to preparatory study, and requests you will be so kind as to receive him under your patronage for one year, and grant him the usual privileges in that seminary over which you preside. We commend him therefore to you, and hoping you will receive him under your protection, subscribe ourselves,

Gentlemen,
Your affectionate brethren in Christ,

JOHN FAWCETT,
WILLIAM GREAVES,
WILLIAM THOMAS.

Signed by us, in behalf of }
the rest, Aug. 14, 1791. }

† Memoir of the late Rev. Joseph Hughes, by Dr. Leifchild, p. 145.

LETTERS.

I. TO THE REV. DR. FAWCETT.

Bristol, Oct. 15, 1791.

I am wishing to offer some kind of apology for having neglected so long to write to you. The kindness you have uniformly expressed towards me, and the many advantages I have enjoyed under your care, entitle you to the earliest notices of my circumstances, and, at the same time, leave me no room to doubt that you still feel interested in my happiness, and that any intelligence respecting my situation will not be unacceptable. I intended to write to you immediately after I had written to Lanes, which was the reason why I did not mention you in that letter. The delay may be attributed to a complication of circumstances. I wished to defer it till I could form some judgment of my real situation, and of the state of things at Bristol. Seldom indeed does any great advantage result from procrastination. I have been in this city now about four weeks; I travelled by the coach from Manchester to Birmingham, and thence in two days walked to Bristol, though a length of eighty-eight miles. You will not wonder that at first I felt myself somewhat gloomy and desolate, notwithstanding kind treatment and agreeable accommodations. The separation from my friends had made a painful impression on my mind, which no object I met with here tended to erase; and the contrast between the delightful situation, the most agreeable and improving conversation, and the ever estimable friends of Brearley Hall, and the smoke and noise, and unknown and uninteresting society of Bristol, produced sensations by no means in favour of the latter. Those feelings, however, which do honour to human nature, may be indulged to an unmanly excess. I have by this time recovered most of the cheerfulness and gaiety of which my mind—a mind not the most gay, indeed, or sprightly—is at any time susceptible. In fact, my situation is extremely agreeable. The cause which contributes most to render it so is friendship. I have no intimacy indeed with any of the young men here. I treat them all, and am treated by them, with the most

friendly kind of civility, but I feel not the least inclination to any particular attachments. It has always been my ambition to associate with those who are superior to myself. This ambition was often gratified at Brearley Hall; and here I am become very intimate with Mr. Hughes—a circumstance favourable both to my satisfaction and improvement. I generally spend several hours with him every day in reading, in conversation, or walking. He is free, sprightly, and communicative. He possesses great energy of mind—a variety and originality of thought. His imagination is vivid, and, without any great effort, supplies an endless train of ideas and images; and, which is the most important quality, he seems to have a deep, experimental acquaintance with religion. I admire him much as a preacher. . . . Dr. Evans is an universally respected, beloved, and lamented character. There have not probably been very many instances of an union of piety, learning, benevolence, and prudence, equally consistent and shining with that which was displayed in him. But he is now no more. . . . The congregation at Broadmead is large and splendid, and the church numerous. The number of us young parsons amounts to about twelve—some of us not very great or amiable characters, it must be confessed. . . . There are, however, two or three among us very promising. The Academy possesses many advantages, among which are the extensive and valuable library and philosophical apparatus, the very satisfactory accommodations, and the agreeable situation of the place—agreeable, I mean, when compared with most other parts of the city. Bristol is a flourishing, commercial city; but by no means elegant and fine, nor distinguished by intelligence and taste. Bath, however, to which I made an excursion lately with Mr. Hughes, exhibits a great profusion of elegance and splendour.

. . . . A few days since, in company with Mr. Hughes, I spent a day with Miss Hannah More. She, with four other sisters, all unmarried, resides at the distance of about ten miles from the city. They are all very sensible and agreeable, but she is quite interesting. She was familiarly acquainted with Johnson, and many other distinguished persons who are dead, and is equally well known to most of the geniuses of the present day. Perhaps her poetical abilities,

though acknowledged very great, form one of the least of her excellencies. If piety and beneficence can give lustre to a character, hers is transcendent. She lives in a kind of retirement, little noticed, except by her distant friends; and, in conjunction with her sisters, whose minds are congenial with her own, employs most of her time in benevolent undertakings, in visiting the poor, furnishing them with necessaries, and procuring instruction for their ignorant children, at the very time that she could figure among poetesses and peeresses. Some of her undertakings, in the design, conduct, difficulties, and success, are so very remarkable, and discover such evident interpositions of divine Providence, that they almost assume the air of romance. If I ever saw the spirit of the Redeemer and his religion realized, it is in her conversation and character. I expect the pleasure of visiting her to be pretty often repeated.

I please myself with the hope that you are on the whole comfortable and prosperous, both in respect to religion and your other engagements. I request you will continue to pray for me. I make my apology for having so long neglected to write. It is indeed with difficulty that I can sequester as much time as I would for purposes of this kind. I hope I am learning in some measure to improve my time; one of the most important, and to me most difficult, of all lessons. In religion I hope I am rather advancing than declining. I have to attend to Latin and Greek every day. A person in the city is at present reading a course of lectures in experimental philosophy, which most of us attend. . . .

II. TO MR. H. HORSFALL.

Bristol, Nov. 16, 1791.

If you had been my Dulcinea I certainly durst not now write at all, after having delayed it so long. You see I am attempting to pass off with a jest what you may think needs a serious apology. I confess it does; but as the case stands, I have none to offer. I have been prevented by an odd mixture of business and idleness, each of which you know

is unfavourable to writing letters, particularly when letters cost so much labour as mine generally do. I must yet request you to dismiss the suspicion that I have "forgotten you all" at Brearley Hall, and for this reason, that I assure you it is without foundation; at the same time, a sort of confidence that you are all mighty gay and felicitous, enjoying yourselves and one another, has done something towards quieting my conscience in the neglect of writing. . . . I am more obliged to you than I can express for your very curious and sprightly letter. Nothing could have been more acceptable, or more entertaining, not only on account of its coming from you, but on account also of its contents. It will, besides, furnish me with a few ideas (a scarce article at Bristol) to reverberate,* and assist me to fill three sides of a sheet, which might otherwise have been a very difficult affair. . . . My regard for you and my other worthy friends at Brearley Hall and at Mount, is not at all diminished by absence and distance. Perhaps I never felt it more warm than at this moment. Probably I shall never enter with such real cordiality into any other friendships. I feel no inclination, nay, I feel a strong aversion, to any attempt to cultivate general or numerous intimacies. Nature never formed me for it. Imagination itself can scarcely place me in a more perfectly pleasing situation than ascending the hill below your father's, and sitting down to tea with your mother. I hope to renew this delightful satisfaction, if all continue well, in something less than eight months. And within this interval I flatter myself (and I am ready to suppose you do the same) with the hope of making very great improvement in learning and in piety. What an estimable possession is time! Permit me to urge you, as I am urging myself, to a nobler improvement of it. I have lately laid down a kind of plan for the distribution of my time and

* An expression probably suggested by the following passage in Young, whose "Night Thoughts" he regarded as "the most impressive moral poetry in existence."

Full on ourselves descending in a line,
Pleasure's bright beam is feeble in delight;
Delight intense is taken by rebound,
Reverberated pleasures fire the breast.

Night 2.

studies, which I already find to be of service. One part of it is, to devote all the time from rising in the morning, which is generally about six o'clock, till half-past eight (when we have family worship succeeded by breakfast) to prayer and reading the bible, together with a little of some other book of a religious and devotional kind, as *Night Thoughts*, *Saurin's Sermons*, or some other. I trust you are growing in religion; probably neither of us can be more fully convinced than we are, of the vast importance of this. We see some in low circumstances in life, privileged with none of our advantages for the acquisition of knowledge, for retirement, reading, and contemplation, yet glowing with the zeal, and melting with the warmth of piety. Is not the world then entitled to expect from us something approaching to angelic excellence? "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required!" I am resolving to be more intimately conversant with the Scriptures, and a better resolution, I think, cannot be formed. I wish to read them with vigilant attention and devotional seriousness. A diligent and pious frame of heart will be found, I believe, the best assistance to understand the sacred books. As to expositors, we have here Gill, Henry, Poole, Doddridge, Guyse, Patrick, Hammond, Owen, and twenty more; but I very rarely open any of them. . . . Nothing could be better adapted to check levity, than the account you give me of Mr. Ingham. Where is the person, as you observe, more likely for life than he was? Neither of us, I suppose, can stand in any comparison. Happiness, my friend, absolutely consists in such a state of mind, that death shall be welcome, and life still shall be sweet; that is, in being equally prepared to improve life, or to resign it. . . . I often think that no gratitude can be equal to the mercies with which I am indulged. I very seldom do anything in the way of preaching. I hope you will not cease to pray for me.

III. TO THE REV. DR. FAWCETT.

Bristol, Dec. 26, 1791.

I think that absence, distance, and time, have augmented my regard for you, and my other much valued friends at Brearley. The recollection of the advantages and the pleasures of my situation, when that situation placed me near you, always affects me with gratitude to Heaven, with self-congratulation, and at the same time with feelings of regret, from the remembrance of pleasures which I now enjoy no more. Brearley is the scene to which fancy recurs with fondness; and I often feel a wish to give some more expressive testimony than I am able, of the gratitude and respect I bear to you, and the other characters who honour it. I hope that the happiness of having you for a friend will ever continue, and that I shall ever be concerned to deserve it. Next to the favour of God, my ambition aspires to the esteem and friendship of such men as you; and I wish to acquire and exhibit that superiority of character and abilities which will most effectually tend to ensure them. My present circumstances are very favourable to improvement, both in literature and piety. I wish to advance with rapid, and still accelerated progress. The value of time, the deficiencies of my character, and possible attainments, flash upon my mind with more forcible conviction than ever before. I can sometimes grasp the idea of universal and transcendent excellence; and it always excites, at least, a temporary ebullition of spirit. I cannot doubt the possibility of becoming greatly wise and greatly good; and while such an object places itself in view, and invites pursuit, no spirit that possesses the least portion of ethereal fire can remain unmoved. I despise mediocrity. I wish to kindle with the ardour of genius. I am mortified almost to death, to feel my mind so contracted, and its energies so feeble or so torpid. I read such writers as Young and Johnson with a mixture of pleasure and vexation. I cannot forbear asking myself, Why cannot I think in a manner as forcible and as original as theirs? Why cannot I rise to their sublimities of sentiment, or even to an elevation still more stupendous? Why cannot I pierce through nature with a glance? Why cannot I effuse those beams of genius which penetrate every object, and illuminate every scene?

I believe the possible enlargement of the human mind is quite indefinite, and that Heaven has not fixed any impassable bounds.

I am solicitous to cultivate warm and growing piety. I know that on it happiness entirely depends, and that without it intellectual pursuits either cannot be successful, or in proportion to the degree of success will be injurious. That character is the most dignified, which reflects the most lively image of the divine excellence. Heaven is the proper region of sublimity; and the more we dwell there, the more we shall triumph in conscious grandeur of soul. Intimate communion with the Deity will invest us, like Moses, with a celestial radiance. At the same time, I am experimentally convinced that the spirit of religion is extremely delicate and fine, and no moderate degree of vigilance is requisite to preserve it. This vigilance is absolutely incompatible with indolence and thoughtlessness; and these are the evil spirits that most particularly haunt me, and from which I have suffered, and still suffer, greatly. Oh for a mind all alive to religion, completely consecrated to God, and habitually devotional! Habitual piety is indeed a very interesting subject: it has lately often struck my thoughts. I am wishing to know how far, and by what means, it is really attainable. Though I would wish to concentrate in myself all the genuine piety in the world, I yet suspect there is such a thing as a *romantic* religion. Amidst the laborious, the even painfully laborious, efforts which religion requires, amidst opposition from within and from without, amidst the intricacies that perplex, the burdens that fatigue, the impediments that obstruct, and the allurements that divert, I hope I am making some progress; and I request that your prayers may promote it. . . . Intelligence of any importance seems rather scarce at the north end of Bristol; probably not so at Brearley, as it is communicated through so many different channels. I hear of no very capital projects or manœuvres in the republic of letters, as it is called. Perhaps you have seen Cowper's Homer. I still cannot but wish he had been differently employed. I have not taken much notice of it. On reading a few passages I thought, This may possibly be Homer himself, but if it is, Pope is a greater poet than Homer. . . . I continue on terms of the most perfect intimacy with Mr.

Hughes, which I consider as a very great felicity. His age is only twenty-three. His mental vigour is very great, and of such a nature as to communicate a kind of contagion. . . . Next week I expect to be some time with Mr. Hughes at Bath, where the Miss Mores reside during the winter. You will allow that a few of my hours may be well spent in forming plans of study and improvement for the next half year, and that the design is laudable of beginning to live anew. . . .

IV. TO MR. H. HORSFALL.

Bristol, Jan. 6, 1792.

I most humbly beg your pardon for this long interval between receiving and answering your letter. You must know I affect to be a *genius*, and geniuses claim an indulgence to be irregular. But yet, if I had felt a proper degree of sympathy with you in the very afflictive circumstances which your letter describes, my sensibility would have led me to write sooner. As I will never relinquish the character of sensibility, which has been generally found connected with genius, I exculpate myself by observing that when you wrote, "the bitterness of death was past," and your letter was calculated, not to infuse melancholy, but to excite those pleasurable sensations which are felt in reflecting on sorrows that are gone. At the same time I feel for you painfully, in the apprehension that the afflictions from which I hope you at present experience a happy exemption, may too frequently return upon you. For my own part, I confess I wish to be taught to sympathize with sorrow, without so much of the discipline of actual suffering. Still, however, may I be resigned to the gracious will of Heaven!

I was requesting pardon;—how fortunate that other mortals are guilty, and need pardon as well as myself! This is particularly the case with you. Certainly, to send me *half a sheet* was most notorious; and but for the passionate cries, and entreaties, and promises with which you conclude, I should fall on you without mercy. Even these can scarcely secure you from the effects of my indignation; but I will endeavour to calm the furious passion, with the hope that you will never do

so again, if I will but excuse this once. It is long since I wrote to you before, but silence itself may instruct. As, for instance, from my silence you may infer, first, that my esteem for you is such that I have not words in which to express it; secondly, that the city suggests no new ideas to be communicated; thirdly, that I have not yet fallen in love; or, fourthly, that I dare not tell it; fifthly, that I am not extremely concerned about what you tell me of certain persons of our acquaintance, and their attempts and designs. These are inferences which you would not, perhaps, have drawn, but could any thing be more obvious?

. . . . I am a little acquainted with two or three very worthy and amiable females, and from them, you must know, my intellectual qualities have gained me great respect. . . . 'Tis time to inform you that you are a set of ignorant, tasteless things in Yorkshire, for these ladies pronounce that my countenance, though very grave, has yet a pleasing air, expressive of sensibility and benevolence. What silly folks you were to take up a different opinion when I was among you! I perfectly accord to your very serious reflection on ruffles and hair dressing. But it happens oddly that while you are grave, I am in the humour to laugh. I am thinking how you would look with *powder*. It is said to give my appearance a considerable advantage; you will not therefore wonder that I frequently use it. What contributed a good deal to gain me the respect of the ladies I mentioned, was an *Oration on Sensibility*, written as an academical exercise; it has been bandied about, and read, more than it deserves. It was sent without my knowing it, to Dr. Stennett, and is now I believe, somewhere in Oxfordshire. I have repeatedly designed to burn it. I think I have produced an abler composition since. I wrote all the sermon I preached last Sunday at our meeting in Broadmead. . . . I hope you are advancing in learning and religion. I sometimes ask myself what it is to live well. It is to be pious, benevolent, and diligent. To be pious, is to be fully consecrated to God—to cherish his love, to obey his commands, and to live and act with a direct view to his glory. To be benevolent, is to be kindly affectioned towards men, to pray for them, to employ all our ability for their good. To be diligent, is [*the manuscript is here imperfect*] The

work of religion is difficult, difficult indeed. "Trust in the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart." I request an interest in your prayers.

V. TO MR. H. HORSFALL.

Bristol, March 13, 1792.

. . . . The enjoyments and possessions of this life are to us valuable, precisely in that proportion in which they prepare, or conduce to prepare us for another. You express a hope of being a better man by the time you see me. I would cordially and ardently adopt the same hope for myself. If Providence shall bring about that event, at the time and in the manner desired, it must yet be preceded by a long train of hours, each of which is given for some valuable end. Let us, my friend, try with earnestness, of what improvements our intellects and our piety are really capable, in such a space of time. I have no news for you. This is a soil not fertile of remarkable incidents. Commercial pursuits (and what else can Bristol exhibit?) do not always interest the philosopher; it is certain they have seldom interested me. . . .

VI. TO THE REV. DR. FAWCETT.

Bristol, March 30, 1792.

If any engagement has a claim to be thought pleasing, it certainly must be that of writing to you. To converse with one who is always kind, and who views every thing and every character with an eye of candour, is truly grateful; and writing, as the substitute for personal intercourse, admits a degree of the same pleasure. That I have not written oftener, therefore, must be attributed to that excessive indolence which is unwilling to purchase even the highest satisfaction at the price of a little mental labour. I am so fully conscious of this unfortunate quality, that I am sometimes ready to wish myself engaged in some difficult

undertaking, which I absolutely must accomplish, or die in the attempt. I am convinced that on me a retired life would lose many of its advantages. The composure of it, instead of removing obstructions and exciting my powers to action, would soothe them into languor and debility. . . . Long as it is since I wrote to you before, no incident worthy of particular notice has occurred—or perhaps the very circumstance of my being apt to suffer things to pass without notice, is itself the reason why I do not distinguish and recollect particulars. Many events may possibly have engaged the attention of other men, which I was too thoughtless to observe, or too ignorant to comprehend their consequence. I am a very indifferent philosopher, I confess, for I have neither curiosity nor speculation. This inattention to the external world might be excused, if the deficiency were supplied from within. If I were, like some men, a kingdom or a world within myself, superior entertainment should soon make my friends forget the uninteresting particulars of ordinary intelligence. How enviable the situation—to feel the transition from the surrounding world, into one's own capacious mind, like quitting a narrow, confined valley, and entering on diversified and almost boundless plains. If this felicity were mine, I might be equally unconcerned to obtain or to recollect the news of the town. I might explore new and unknown regions of intellect and fancy—and after having carried my career to a distance which the most erratic comets never reached, return with the most glowing and amazing descriptions of the scenes through which I had passed.

Your family is by its constitution subject to perpetual change. It is formed not for itself, but for the world; not to increase private and domestic happiness, but to subserve the public welfare. This consideration, I think, must be capable of yielding high satisfaction. There is something peculiarly animating in the idea of diffusing knowledge and happiness through the world. . . .

. . . . I often feel a solicitude to know what are those schemes of usefulness which unite, in their greatest degrees, cool reason and the boldness and spirit of generous adventure. A few nights ago I was in company with a Quaker, a man whom I would select as one of the first specimens of

possible human excellence. His sentiments discover a superiority of intellect, and his character admits, I believe, few rivals. His conversation was chiefly directed to prove the practicability of many designs which that kind of wisdom which is unconnected with benevolence and generosity, is always ready to condemn, and which the world deem romantic and preposterous. His ideas, which were quite original, struck me with all the force of truth, and scarcely wanted the assistance of many interesting facts with which he illustrated and confirmed them. It appears to me that but little is accomplished because but little is vigorously attempted; and that but little is attempted because difficulties are magnified. A timorously cautious spirit, so far from acting with resolution, will never think itself in possession of the preliminaries for acting at all. Perhaps perseverance has been the radical principle of every truly great character.

I am sometimes apprehensive that I do not give to religion that preference of regard which it merits, and that superiority of influence with which it ought to operate on the system of life. I feel that religion is the life of every genuine excellence; but must lament an unhappy tendency rather to deviate from it, than embrace it. Religion presents itself in an appearance different from direct and honest Christianity—a little more *softened* to the spirit of the world—affecting, at the same time, to retain all the essential qualities of Christianity. When led into the scenes of life by this kind of equivocal piety, men are apt to lose the true spirit and feelings of religion; they substitute a certain chimerical generosity of spirit for Christian zeal,—and, inflamed by a delusive idea of greatness and expansion of mind, break down the sacred boundaries that separate important truth from dangerous error. I find that in attempting to clear away the extraneous matter which ignorance and prejudice have attached to religion, there is danger of a presumptuous freedom which injures the great object itself. Every thing rises in proof of the necessity of seeking both our happiness and our wisdom entirely from on high. . . . Two of those whom I left in your family are, it seems, taken off by death. There is at least thus much of the consolatory in the event, that death has intercepted the many sorrows and sins which

the train of advancing life would have brought on; and if the loss shall give those who feel it most sensibly, more fully to God, it will be happily compensated. . . . I often recollect Dr. Young's expression, "Give thy mind sea-room."* There are minds, and I must admire them, that disdain all restraints but those alone which the Deity has imposed. Perhaps it must be allowed, at the same time, that spirits of infinite vigour and fire are not the most necessary characters in the government of the world, or the cause of religion. The greatest abilities are not always well directed, and when well directed, do not always produce an adequate effect. . . . Hall is expected by his relations in Bristol next month. I shall be quite eager to see him. The opinion which the most sensible here entertain of his powers leads me to think that all the accounts you have heard rather fall below than exaggerate them.

VII. TO MR. H. HORSFALL.

Bristol, April 2, 1792.

. . . . Depend on it, if I find any faults about you when I see you again, I shall criticise them with the most bitter and sarcastic severity. For instance, if you are silent in a circle of sensible friends, I shall either say you are unsocial, or insinuate that you are *ignorant*. If I find you have told all your secrets and mine to Miss — and Lady —, I shall remind you that it is necessary there should be some silly fellows to serve the ladies for playthings; just as children must have their dolls. If you continue in the use of *sugar*, I shall greatly suspect your generosity and humanity. I never taste it in any form; I have even almost forgot it, so that I never feel the want of it. Tea is now become as agreeable without sugar as before it was with it. . . . This is a fair warning now. If you are conscious of any of these faults, I hope you will take care to reform in time. I wonder

- * *Give thy mind sea-room* ; keep it wide of earth,
That rock of souls immortal ; cut thy cord ;
Weigh anchor ; spread thy sails ; call every wind ;
Eye thy great pole-star ; make the land of life.

Night 7.

whether, when we may appear together again, some of our friends will like us as ill as they did before. I hope we shall give no just cause for their ill-natured observations and their idle remarks. But if they will find, or make a cause, let them fully please themselves. . . . Let us mortify their captiousness by that kind of contempt alone which is expressed by displaying a noble superiority of understanding, manliness, and piety. The impertinence of conceit is unworthy of notice; but let us be anxiously concerned that neither our enemies nor our pretended friends may ever have it in their power to impeach our characters with respect to any serious and important matter. I trust, my dear friend, we shall ever stand at a distance from everything vain and foolish,—everything foppish and affected,—everything proud, self-important, and disgusting. Whenever we discover a disregard of serious and important concerns, and whenever we appear as if we thought ourselves too dignified or too wise to converse and be familiar, occasionally at least, with the meanest and most ignorant, we shall betray ourselves into our enemies' hands, and justify in a measure their reflections. I hope you go forward with pleasure in the pursuits of learning. It is delightful to feel one's mind enlarging, to contemplate an endless succession of new objects, to extend our conquests in the regions of intellect and fancy, and to be perpetually aspiring to the sublimities of knowledge and of piety. We find that resolution and diligence are never exerted in vain. Sincere and well-directed efforts will promote our religion, as much as study will improve us in learning, or experience increase our prudence. Everything is attainable which we can justify ourselves in desiring; and certainly we cannot too warmly desire whatever can make us more happy in ourselves, or qualify us to impart happiness to others. Nothing can so effectually expand the mind as the views which religion presents; for the views of religion partake of the magnitude and glory of that Being, from whom religion proceeds. Their amplitude will extend, and their dignity will exalt, the mind that can reflect and can be devout. . . .

. . . Amidst your pleasures and your prospects, surely you can admit one thought of pity for a poor exile on whom love never smiles, before whom no pleasing prospects

open, and to whom life itself is insipid. But, if life cannot make me happy, let it never make me malignant. If the visits of happiness to me are but transient, that very circumstance perhaps renders them more permanent to my friends. While the inhabitants of the North Pole are involved in a tedious night, those of the South enjoy a perpetual day. . . . Perhaps I may hope to hear from you before I go off for Africa. . . . This minute I have received a letter from Mr. J. Stovin, at Birmingham, in which he particularly inquires whether I ever hear from *you*. He writes seriously. In my last to him I expressed a wish that he would hear Mr. Pearce, a lively, popular young preacher at Birmingham, who, a few years since, went from our Academy. He writes: "On your recommendation I went to hear Mr. Pearce. He is, I think, an excellent preacher, and puts me in mind of those frequent admonitions and instructions I have heard from good Mr. Fawcett. These instructions afford me an ample theme of reflection," &c. I always thought him a youth of a generous spirit. How happy should I be to see that spirit ennobled by religion!

VIII. TO MR. H. HORSFALL.

Bristol, April 19, 1792.

. . . I once felt something like *envy* in observing how Mr. H. and several others of the same class could preach; but I believe I should not feel the slightest degree of it now. I think I should feel no more difficulty in preaching before twenty of them than before so many children. You say I must do something great in the preaching line when I come into Yorkshire. Let not my Yorkshire friends expect too much. Probably there never was a more indolent student at this, or any other Academy. I know but very little more of learning or anything else than when I left you. I have been a trifler all my life to this hour. When I shall reform, God only knows! I am constantly wishing and intending it. But my wishes and intentions have thus far displayed, in a striking degree, the imbecility of human

nature. To-morrow is still the time when this unhappy system of conduct shall be rectified.

My dear friend, I hope you are diligent and pious. Time is infinitely valuable. Oh! do not suffer it to be lost. I hope you already possess and exercise that wisdom which I hope at last to attain. The work of life is great—greater to *me*, in proportion to the long season that I have neglected it. I perceive that religion does not promise in order to deceive, nor threaten in order to dismay; her intentions are uniformly kind. Be much in prayer, and in your prayers do not forget me. . . . Our vacation will commence in five or six weeks; if well, I must then spend a week or two in visiting Bath, Cowslip Green, the country residence of the Miss Mores, and some other places. The time I shall be in London is uncertain. . . .

IX. TO THE MANAGERS OF THE BAPTIST COLLEGE.

Bristol, May 26, 1792.

HONOURED GENTLEMEN,—The expiration of the term of literary privileges reminds me of the acknowledgments due to those to whose liberality I owe them.

One year has passed, attended with the important favours of your patronage, which has given value to time by conferring the advantages for improving it. My gratitude for your kindness will I trust be lasting; and never disappoint that kindness by neglecting or relinquishing its object. May He, whose cause you wish to promote, amply reward you! and may all who thus experience your generous assistance reflect honour on the institution and on you. Quitting the seminary without any determinate prospects, I humbly await that train of futurity through which superior wisdom may conduct me, firmly resolved, at the same time, that every scene into which I may be introduced shall witness me actively alive in the cause of religion and of God.

I am, honoured gentlemen,

With grateful respect,

Your obliged, humble servant,

J. FOSTER.

CHAPTER II.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE—IRELAND—RETURN TO YORKSHIRE.

1792—1796.

AFTER leaving Bristol, the first place in which Mr. Foster regularly engaged as a preacher, was Newcastle-on-Tyne.* An ancient room in this town, situated at the top of a flight of steps called Tuthill Stairs, and formerly used as the Mayor's Chapel, had been occupied by a Baptist congregation ever since the year 1725. It was capable of holding scarcely more than a hundred persons, and both before and during Foster's stay, the average attendance was much below this number. Yet, in so small an auditory, there were a few individuals capable of appreciating the merits of the preacher, and who took a very gratifying interest in his discourses. "I have involuntarily caught a habit," he tells his friend Mr. Horsfall, "of looking too much on the right hand side of the meeting. 'Tis on account of about half-a-dozen sensible fellows who sit together there. I cannot keep myself from looking at them. I sometimes almost forget that I have any other auditors. They have so many significant looks, pay such a particular and minute attention, and so instantaneously catch any thing curious, that they become a kind of mirror in which the preacher may see himself. Sometimes, whether you will believe it or not, I say humorous things.

* His immediate predecessor was the late Rev. JOSEPH KINGHORNE, of Norwich, who, in his own denomination, was inferior only to Dr. Gill in an intimate acquaintance with Rabinnical literature. The results of his studies were known to the public chiefly by a new edition of Professor James Robertson's "*Clavis Pentateuchi*," and a sermon preached before the Society for the Conversion of the Jews, on "*The Miracles of Jesus not performed by the power of the Shemhamphorash*."

Some of these men instantly perceive it, and smile; I, observing, am almost betrayed into a smile myself.”*

Mr. Foster remained at Newcastle little more than three months; he arrived August 5, 1792, and left towards the close of November. According to his own account, his mode of life during this period was almost that of a recluse; his mental habits were undisciplined, his application to study, fitful and desultory; and his purpose as to the specific employment of his future life, unfixed. “I am thinking,” he writes to his friend, who was then a student at Brearley, “how different is the state of the family in which you reside, from that where my lot is fixed for the present. Your family seems a kind of ludicro-moral museum, comprising specimens of all the odd productions found in the world of men. Now observe the contrast. Mrs. F. is, with one of the servants, gone some time since to London, and the whole mansion is now left to Mr. F., one maid, and myself. Three or four weeks since, Mr. F. was bit by the mastiff that guards the factory, so severely that he has been confined to the house, and at present does not even quit his bed-chamber. Now, then, I absolutely breakfast, dine, drink tea, and sup alone; except that beside my table places himself Pero, a large and very generous dog, my most devoted friend, and the willing companion of all my adventures. Having, you know, neither spouse nor children, I frequently amuse myself with Pero. I am mistaken, or the name of Pero shall live when your coxcombs, your consequential blockheads, and your . . . images of fattened clay, are heard of no more. Though the town is only about two or three hundred yards from the house, I never take any notice of it, and very rarely enter it,

* The only survivor of this little group, J. L. Angas, Esq., has a vivid recollection of the breathless attention with which they listened to Mr. Foster's discourses. One sermon especially, on “This is not your rest,” made an indelible impression on his mind.

but on the Sunday. I often walk into the fields, where I contemplate horses and cows, and birds and grass; or along the river, where I observe the motions of the tide, the effect of the wind, or, if 'tis evening, the moon and stars reflected in the water. When inclined to read, I am amply furnished with books. When I am in the habit of musing, I can shut myself in my solitary chamber, and walk over the floor, throw myself in a chair, or recline on my table; or if I would dream, I can extend myself on the bed. When the day is fled, I lie down in the bosom of night and sleep soundly till another arrives; then I awake solitary still; I either rise to look at my watch, and then lay myself on the bed, awhile looking at the morning skies, or . . . in a magic reverie; behold the varied scenes of life, and poise myself on the wings of visionary contemplation, over the shaded regions of futurity. . . . Such, my friend, are the situation and the train in which I pass life away." At another time, in a tone of deeper sentiment, he thus expresses himself: "I sometimes feel the review of the past very interesting. The vicissitudes which my views and my feelings have undergone, have been numerous and great. They have never remained long stationary; and they were perhaps never in a more uncertain and fluctuating state than at present. I feel conscious of possessing great powers, but not happily combined, nor fully brought forth. Some habits of the most unfortunate and dangerous kind have taken root; and will not be exterminated, I am afraid, without great difficulty.*—At the age of twenty-two, I feel I have still to *begin to live*; I have yet in a great measure my principles to fix, my plans to form, my means to select, and habits of exertion to acquire. A Herculean labour,

* To prevent any misapprehension of the strong language here employed by so rigid and conscientious a self-observer, it may be remarked, that on comparing it with other passages in the correspondence, it is evident Foster alludes to what he elsewhere terms, "the inveterate, most unfortunate habits of indolent, desultory, musing vagrancy."

how shall I accomplish it?" In another letter of a later date, he says, "How dark is futurity still! how uncertain and limited our prospects! I wonder what or where my next undertaking will be! I am apprehensive it will not be in the line of preaching; but I leave it to that futurity where it dwells, and whence no conjectures can invite it."

From Newcastle, Mr. Foster returned to his friends in Yorkshire, but left them again in the beginning of the year 1793, having been invited to preach to a Baptist society, meeting in Swift's Alley, Dublin. Nearly all that is known of the events of his life during the three following years is contained in one of his letters to Mr. Hughes, dated October 17, 1796. The introductory sentences are too characteristic to be omitted. "Your letter surprised me," he says, "into a pleasure, strong enough to survive a struggle with the guilty consciousness of neglect. My silence appears strange even to myself; and I know not whether it will be rendered less so to you, while I observe, that, in our last personal intercourse, I felt the oppression of a mortifying inferiority and awkwardness, which, after several months, during which I intended to write, grew into a kind of determination to become unknown till I should be quite worthy to be known. Meanwhile, I have always retained the fixed resolve of offering, at a better period, an atonement, in a more meritorious friendship; I have eagerly seized every opportunity of obtaining information concerning you; and assure you, from a heart that has not yet learned insincerity from the world, that my regard for you has suffered no diminution. It is among my most flattering anticipations that I shall yet again find myself 'in the same room with you and Mrs. H.,' to taste (may I hope with even superior zest?) enjoyments *something like* those which are gone." . . .

"In Ireland," he proceeds to inform his friend, "I preached little more than a year, one month of which was passed most

delightfully at Cork. Nothing can be imagined less interesting, than the Baptist society in Dublin. The congregation was very small when I commenced, and almost nothing when I voluntarily closed. A dull scene it was, in which I preached with but little interest, and they heard with less. The church, of which, with a very few regular or casual hearers besides, the whole congregation consisted, was composed of a rich family or two, quite people of the world—of three or four families in business, emulating the show and consequence of the others—of half-a-dozen poor individuals, so little connected with their Christian *superiors*, and so little regarded by them, that between them was '*a Gadibus ad Gangem*'—and an independent character or two, tired and ashamed of such a society. With such an assemblage the soul of Foster was not formed to coalesce, and my connexions were fewer than could be supposed possible to a public person.

"I sought, and partly found, a compensation among the girls of a charity-school, connected with the meeting, to whom I talked with familiar gaiety, gave rewards of learning, and read many amusing books ;* in solitary rambles, books, newspapers, converse with the few who *were* friends, the greater part of them not of the church ; and in speculating on the varieties of a metropolis.

"I did not distinguish myself by any considerable violation of the parsonic garb ; . . . but my contempt of ecclesiastical formalities was avowed and apparent on all occasions ; and my acquaintance did not involve a single man of *cloth* in the city. After an interval of several

* "His habits were very simple; he was fond of walking; and evidently, while he paced round our little garden, his mind was full of some subject of deep interest. I also know, that the children of an orphan school connected with the place of worship in which he officiated had much of his care, and he went daily to read to the children instructive and amusing books, and seemed most solicitous to improve their minds, and to cheer them in the midst of their dull routine."—*Extract of a Letter from J. P'urser, Esq., of Rathmines.*

months spent in Yorkshire, I returned to Dublin to make an experiment on a classical and mathematical school, which had been left to decline to nothing but the room and forms, by a very respectable Quaker of my acquaintance, now or lately in London. The success did not encourage me to prosecute it more than eight or nine months. I remained in Dublin several months after its relinquishment. I attended as a hearer in Swift's Alley when there was service, but had little more connexion with the people than if I had never seen them before. . . . I think the last letter I received predicted the extinction of the society.*

"During this latter residence in Dublin, my connexion with violent democrats, and my share in forming a society under the denomination of 'Sons of Brutus,' exposed me at one period, to the imminent danger, or at least the expectation, of chains and a dungeon.

"I have in Ireland three or four cordial friends, for whose sake I shall be pleased with any future opportunity of revisiting it. I have now been here more than half a year. If you should ask, How employed? I can scarcely tell; a little in business, I might say, in which my brother is engaged; but oftener in literature, or rather its environs. I long since indulged the design of some time writing for publication; I am lately come into it more decisively. After fluctuating among various subjects and forms of writing, I have drawn the plan of a kind of moral essay, and composed an inconsiderable part; but my intolerable tardiness in writing, together with the constitutional indolence which I have not yet overcome, threatens long to protract the accomplishment; and my dissatisfaction with what I produce, precludes that enthusiasm which is said to

* This prediction has not been fulfilled. The congregation has continued, and a new chapel, in a more commodious site, has been lately built.

be necessary to excellence. However, I am resolved on a complete experiment.

“Some months since, I formed the project of attempting at Leeds, where my occasional sermons have found some admirers, a course of lectures on moral and literary subjects, in a mode somewhat similar to Thelwall’s, but it was not encouraged into execution. I had conceived the plan, too, of a train of discourses, different from sermons only in being without texts, on moral and religious subjects, addressed entirely to young people, to be publicly delivered each Sunday evening, in the meeting where I attend. There could be no interest but that of benevolence here. I intended my utmost efforts to simplify, illustrate, and persuade, by every expedient in the power of a mind possessed of a measure both of amplitude and originality. But Mr. —, a very good and sensible, but a timid man, tenacious of modes and notions which the church and time have sanctioned, and dreading the profane and ill-omened flight of philosophy and fancy athwart *the good old way*, as peasants turn back in dismay at the sight of three magpies crossing their road, durst not admit such a measure, ‘for it would not be preaching the gospel!’ So now, you ought to applaud my activity in forming plans, and my philosophy in bearing their disappointment.

“It is now a great while since I changed, very properly, the cleric habit for a second edition of tail and coloured clothes, and in this guise I have preached at several places since I returned to England; but I have not preached at all lately. Yet, after all, I extremely regret that I am not employed in preaching. When I contemplate the infinite value of religion, the melancholy darkness of human minds (especially while I view the interesting countenances of young people, on whom alone, perhaps, any good can be operated), I am forcibly admonished that a man like me

should be something else amidst the assemblies of Sunday than what I am,—a very inattentive hearer. But what should I do? It is vain to wish what would exactly gratify me—the power of building a meeting of my own, and, without being controlled by any man, and without even the existence of what is called a *church*, of preaching gratis to all that chose to hear.

“ That denomination of people in which I have been conversant, have stronger causes of exception than the colour of a waistcoat—my *opinions* have suffered some alteration. I have discarded, for instance, the doctrine of eternal punishments; I can avow no opinion on the peculiar points of Calvinism, for I have none, nor see the possibility of forming a satisfactory one. I am no Socinian; but I am in doubt between the orthodox and Arian doctrines, not without some inclination to the latter. It is a subject for deliberate, perhaps long, investigation; and I feel a sincerity which assures me that the issue, whatever it may be, must be *safe*. In this state of thoughts and feelings, I have just written to Mr. David, of Frome, requesting to be informed whether there be, within his sphere of acquaintance, an Arian congregation in want of a preacher, expressing to him, however, that ‘my preference of *such* a congregation does not arise from a conclusive coincidence of opinion, but from a conviction that there only I can find the candour and scope which I desire.’ But I am vexed to find this tedious detail has precluded me from subjects more interesting and more mutual I felt a propensity to smile at your confession of the wane of the sentimental fire, till checked by a most mournful consciousness of something similar in myself. Indeed, indeed, it is too soon. When sometimes apprehensive that fate means to deny me the sweet ambling circle of love and domestic felicity, I almost resolve to assume the stalk sublime of the hero

adventuring to carry humanity amidst savage nature in some distant clime. . . . My mother is not greatly altered from what she was some years back ; but my father is rapidly declining, by a painful course, to the grave. If I were not too proud to solicit what I do not deserve, I should breathe a warm, a very warm wish, to hear from you soon again. The very first step of generosity is probably the easiest. Give me a detail at least as copious as the example furnished in this. Bristol has lost the interest it held in my mind, by the successive defection of all I most esteemed there. . . . If you know any congregation, of the description hinted above, in want of a preacher, I shall take it as kind, if you will just mention it."

While at Dublin, Mr. Foster resided with the late John Purser, Esq., and endeared himself to all the inmates, especially to the young people and the domestics. He often read to the family in the evening ; generally works of fiction. Mrs. Radcliff was a very great favourite, and the translations of Schiller. The impression he gave of himself to one of his young companions was that of "a condescending friend who was desirous of putting their mental machinery in motion." At Cork, though his stay was short, he was much admired, and his abilities were more highly estimated than at Dublin.

The following "*Journal of three days*," originally written at Dublin in 1793, but transcribed by Foster in 1796, when he consigned many papers of former years to the flames, will be read with interest, as a record of his interior sentiments :—

Dec. 6, 1793. Reason,—Dignity,—approaching Death,—concur in the solemn command, "Delay no longer!" I obey, and my soul shall sleep no more. *Can* time a month hence be more valuable than time *now*? or if it should, will the time that shall end the month be the *same* that now

passes in the beginning of it? Why then should any of the moments, which are all beyond price, be lost? Let them be lost no longer. Passing and insignificant are the circumstances of exterior life. The man that seeks the object and the felicity of human life only in eating, drinking, sleeping, dressing, traffic, walking, resting, — had better never have been born. But the internal life, the life of the immortal spirit, is all-important. Who would not wish to raise it to the loftiest pitch of improvement and felicity? I feel myself intrusted with the education of my mind; and attention cannot be too solicitous. 'Tis determined to stimulate, to guide, to watch, its operations. The object is, to acquire *habits* of thinking, observation, devotion, and converse. It will be useful to record the degree of success; at least make an experiment of one month.

Well, the day is gone. Though it has not done much, it has given proof that much may be done. The world of possible improvements is truly boundless. When I look over the immense plain of Nature and Man, and see so many thousand objects capable of suggesting new and interesting trains of thought,—so many tracks which spirits unembodied seem alone to have trod,—how I pity those who are content to confine themselves exclusively to the stupid bustle of business, or who, anxious for intellectual pleasure and wealth, seek them only in the tedious dulness of common-place writers. But the day has gone, and it has not extinguished my hopes, though it has but imperfectly realized my plan. I rose before eight, dressed, and went out to walk. The walk pleasing, though not fertile of sentiment or reflection. How great still the difficulty of *fixing attention*. I noticed *drops of rain* falling on a sheet of water. They have but the most transient effect on the water; they make a very slight impression of the moment, and then can be discerned no more. But observe these drops of rain falling on a meadow or garden; *here* they have an effect to heighten every colour, and feed every growth. Is not this the difference between the mind, which the infinitude of sentiments and objects in this great world can never interest or alter, and that mind which feels the impression, and enriches itself with the value of them all? Those things are among the first Rights of Man, which all

men absolutely need;—as *food*. Men assert the right to eat with the greatest constancy, and, if opposed, with the utmost vehemence. Perhaps nothing so often raises quarrels among children. In every age men have been ingenious, industrious, or knavish, *in order to eat*. Frequently, too, for this they have been cruel, and often they have fought. As life cannot be sustained without eating, most men would risk even life, in order to obtain meat, when it cannot be gained without difficulty or danger. Some men, like certain dogs, see the approaching opportunity of mischief with an equivocal and frightful expression in their countenances, produced by the mingling feelings of pleasure and malignity. Art can sometimes give to the looks of deadly hatred a certain *tinge of blandishment*, which empowers them to fascinate while they alarm. They terrify while they allure, and yet allure while they terrify. Some serpents have the power by their eyes of charming birds, mice, squirrels, &c., into their mouths. I have observed that men of business who pass their lives in the town, when they incidentally meet one another, or their other acquaintance, wear an air that looks like *notice without attention*. They see a person as they see a post, without the slightest feeling of concern, without any movement of mind that acknowledges an interest in his existence, or his case.

I walked—and observed the pensive, most interesting remains of the departing Autumn; noticed the singing of birds, a distant landscape, and miserable-looking men at work; returned, employed my mind on various subjects and fancies, without result, and made several attempts to *study* letters, without success; read nothing but newspapers. In the evening, from seven o'clock till between eight and nine, at the prayer-meeting in Swift's Alley; from that time till between eleven and twelve, on a visit; most of the company very insipid; took no part in the conversation, which, however, was plentiful, but was much amused with observation. But, indeed, is it right to be amused with the folly of beings who ought to be wise? One part of the circle was composed of *ladies*. . . . I listened to their chat. Let me enjoy nonsense no more, if I was not delighted. . . . But though full of transitions, it was so rapid and incessant, that philosophic observation was somewhat baffled. Some times the ladies

would be struck with profound astonishment, would mutually bend forward as they sat, with an inclination of their bodies towards each other, bridling back their heads at the same time, silent for a moment, and staring at one another, as if each had seen an additional *nose* rising on each other's face. I think I heard not one sentiment. There was a long dispute whether a particular house in the town has a door on a certain side. I contemplated with a degree of wonder. I thought, "Have you no ideas about realities and beings that are unseen? about the Eternal Governor, and a future state? Is this all you find in life? and all by which you fortify yourselves against death?" I wish I could have formed a clear conception of the situation of their minds,—that I could be privy to their serious reflections, if they ever have such, or if not, discover how they escape them. The gentlemen talked on forgery, trials, criminals, instances of murder, extent of the laws, priests, and the war. The most awful of names was sometimes taken in vain. The company was less at supper. The talk turned on harvests, salmon, the cunning and familiarity of dogs, goats, tame deer, &c. There was a disagreeable country gentleman there; no urbanity in his manners; his address blunt and abrupt; his visage hard, and unmodified by sentiment, as if it were carved of wood; the turn of his eyes was careless and contemptuous; his nose long and hooked; the colour of his lips approaching to black, and a cavity between his lower lip and projecting chin. He talked much, and told trifling stories. He said that in the spring months he had seen wheat growing in the woolly backs of sheep, and shooting up green. These sheep had been sometimes in the threshing-floor, where the corn probably got into their fleeces. Came home and closed the day.

Dec. 7. Saturday night. Must I exclaim, "*Diem perdidit?*" Whether I have lost *this* or not, I believe I have not saved so many as the man who uttered that regretful sentiment. I rose somewhat earlier than usual. With conscious pain I neglected prayer till late in the day,—late, indeed! Did not walk all the day; passed most of it in a mixture of listless fancies and painful reflections. Another unsuccessful attempt at epistolary writing. Surely my mind is declining into absolute sterility. Toward evening read over

again part of Dr. Moore's "Journal of a Residence in France." Have lately seen elegant portraits of some of the great Conventionists, and still fall asleep and awake with their images and their names on my fancy. Wish to emulate them in some important respects. Happy in family-prayer. . . . Adjusted some of the exteriors for to-morrow. But what has become of the most important part? I hope the last great day will have better days than this to disclose, in the account of my life!

Dec. 8. Sunday night. I hold in recollection the first sensation that I felt on awaking (about seven o'clock), and I see something guilty connected with it. It quickly struck me, "*I have to preach to-day;*" and the thought was unpleasing. It ought not to be thus. In part, the reason was, I suppose, that I had not yet begun to form either of my sermons. I sat up in bed awhile, and caught some very considerable ideas. Ascended the pulpit at the usual time. My text, "And Pilate said, What is truth?" My mind fertile and expansive. . . . After it, went to see a respectable friend confined at home. . . . Had just an hour to study my afternoon sermon. It was tolerably sensible and pertinent, but tame. In the morning I was on wings; this afternoon only *walked*. Some of the sentiments, however, had the merit of being proper, without being common (Matt. v. 8). At seven o'clock heard a sensible sermon from young Feltus. Took particular notice of the small drops on the damp wall, each of which collected a few oblique rays into a focus. Feel a disposition to continue a preacher, and to excel. . . .

Foster returned once more to Yorkshire, in February, 1796, where he continued till his removal to Chichester.

LETTERS.

X. TO MR. H. HORSFALL.

Newcastle, Sept. 20, 1792.

. . . . What an insipid thing this world of mankind is! How few we find whom we can at all wish to make one's

intimate, inseparable friends! How trifling, too, are the efforts and productions of the human mind! I often wonder how it happens, that my own mind, or any other mind, cannot in a moment blaze with ideas superior to the most admirable of Young or Shakspeare. The whole system of human attainments, pleasures, and designs, sometimes strikes me as a confused mass of inanity. Almost everything carries some glaring mark of deficiency or meanness. Ought not *love*, for instance, in order to deserve any regard, to be equal for a perpetuity, to the inexpressible delight of some peculiarly auspicious moments, which return, perhaps, seldom in a person's life; and, though they entrance the heart, wound, by instantly quitting it. . . . My friend, I believe we must tread a little longer the dull round; the day will come that is destined to set our souls at large. Happy that the soul possesses one power—Immortality; which, though it seems at present to slumber in the breast, will at last awake in full vigour, and take vengeance on this dull life, by bursting in a moment the hated chains that bind us to it. The day is short and wintry, but yet let it be improved. Let us take all its advantages before us, and we shall not regret the desert we thus leave barren behind; nor shall we dread to see the close approaching. . . .

XI. TO MR. H. HORSFALL.

Newcastle, Oct. 2, 1792.

I believe hearers generally prefer short or moderate sermons. If the treat is good, so much less, you know, will serve; if it happens to be bad (as in the hands of the best cooks it sometimes will), the smaller quantity the better. You are now, I believe, in the last of your three years. I suppose you sometimes think of prospects; and probably you have not often very clear ones. We must be both flung into the world, and perhaps very sufficiently tossed about. I often wonder where, or how, we shall in the event settle and rest. But let religion be the leading principle, and leave the rest, not to fate, but to God. I am totally unable to give you any satisfactory account of myself, or my

present situation. I am one of those who can make themselves tolerably easy everywhere. I am well treated, and have every accommodation that can be wished. But you will say, this is not the thing; and I acknowledge it. Prosperity in religion, and public usefulness, are objects incomparably more important than simply personal conveniences and circumstantial advantages. I seem nearly at a stand with respect to the adjustment of plans for futurity. Whether I am to be a preacher or not, I cannot tell. I do preach, however, sometimes with great fertility, sometimes with extreme barrenness of mind: insomuch that I am persuaded that no man hearing me in the different extremes, could, from my preaching, imagine it was the same speaker. I never write a line or a word of my sermons. There are some advantages, both with respect to liberty and appearance, attendant on a perfect superiority to notes. Sunday evening (a very wet, uncomfortable night) I preached to about eighteen or twenty auditors, the greatest sermon I ever made. It was from Rev. x. 5, 6, "And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, &c., that there should be time no longer." I always know when I speak well, or the contrary. . . . The subject was grand: and my imagination was in its most luminous habit. I am entirely uncertain whether the people will wish me to stay any longer than the three months. I have no reason to think they much desire it. The world is still a wide place, my friend. . . .

XII. TO MR. H. HORSFALL.

Newcastle, Oct. 2, 1792.

. . . . By this time I suppose your woods and fields, and gardens, have nearly lost their charms. Such scenes are just becoming dreary; and I conjecture that your walks, whether solitary or with Mr. J. or G., are but short, or but few. The birds are assembled in flocks, and the trees are changing their colour. Now you can moralize. You and I shall very soon experience a withering, languishing decline;

and, like nature around us, we too shall die. And surely with future prospects clear, it must be the highest felicity to quit this oppressed and clouded existence, and be transported into light and endless pleasures.

“Through what new scenes and changes must we pass!
The wide, th’ unbounded prospect lies before me,
But shadows, clouds, and darkness, rest upon it.”

Is the *cell* on the other side the orchard in a state as desolate and ruinous as it was when I saw it last? What a number of hours I have spent there! sometimes praying, sometimes attempting to study sermons, which at that period I felt a task of very great difficulty indeed. And many hours I have spent there in reveries, literary projects, calculations of improvement in a given future time, mortifying contrasts of the actual and possible improvement of time and advantages. My conduct to this moment has by no means realized the designs and hopes with which my breast has often glowed in that humble but favourite mansion. The emotions of religion, of something like mental greatness, and of *love*, have alternately inspired and perplexed my bosom in that pensive recess, which is now perhaps left to those mysterious beings, who, like him that haunted it before, are peculiarly attached to a dark and melancholy solitude. . . . At some moments, life, the world, mankind, religion, and eternity, appear to me like one vast scene of tremendous confusion, stretching before me far away, and closed in shades of the most awful darkness—a darkness which only the most powerful splendours of Deity can illumine, and which appears as if they never yet had *illuminated* it. But still, life and the world were made for man; and I, as a man, am designing to try what they are, what they can yield, and to what great, important purpose, they may be rendered subservient. Let us awake, my friend, and look around us, and ask ourselves, Whence we are coming, and whither we are going; and then each of us address himself, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” Let us survey the sphere in which we have to move, and inquire how far our efforts and our influence may be extended. I think we shall come at the point at last. We shall learn what is truth, what is duty, and what is happiness; and where the gracious

assistance is to be obtained, by which we shall be *empowered* to understand the one, and perform the other, and attain and enjoy the third. I have entirely lost myself; but I believe I am writing to H. Horsfall, and I hope two sheets will convince him that I am his friend, and that I wish him to be wise, and useful, and estimable.

XIII. TO MR. H. HORSFALL.

Newcastle, Oct. 2, 1792.

. . . . A correspondent of genius and observation might give you an amusing account of Newcastle; but such qualifications are but in a small degree mine. The town is an immense, irregular mass of houses. There are a few fine, uniform streets; but the greater number exhibit an awkward succession of handsome and wretched buildings. The lower part of the town, as being in the bottom of a valley, is dirty in an odious degree. It contains thousands of wretched beings, not one of whom can be beheld without pity or disgust. . . . The general characteristic of the inhabitants seems to be a certain roughness, expressive at once of ignorance and insensibility. . . . I know little of the dissenters in general. I was one evening lately a good deal amused at the Presbyterian or Scotch meeting, by the stupidity of their psalms, the grimace of the clerk, the perfect insignificance of the parson, and the silly, unmeaning attention of a numerous auditory. . . . But *our* meeting for amplitude and elegance! I believe you never saw its equal. It is, to be sure, considerably larger than your lower school; but then so black, and so dark!* It looks just like a conjuring-room, and accordingly the ceiling is all covered with curious, antique figures to aid the magic. That thing which they call the *pulpit* is as black as a chimney; and, indeed, there is a chimney-piece, and very large old fire-case behind it. There is nothing by which the door of this same *pulpit* can be fastened, so that it remains partly open, as if

* The sombre appearance was owing, in part, to the old oak wainscoting; the pulpit also was of the same material. At one end of the room, the figures "1485," rudely carved, probably mark the date of its erection. It was used as a place of worship before the Baptists purchased it in 1725.

to invite some good person or other to assist you when you are in straits. My friend *Pero*, whom I have mentioned before, did me the honour one Sunday to attempt to enter; but, from some prudential notion, I suppose, I signified my will to the contrary by pulling to the door, and he very modestly retired. Yet I like this pulpit mightily; 'tis so much the reverse of that odious, priestly pomp which insults your eyes in many places. I hate priestly consequence and ecclesiastical formalities. When I order a new coat, I believe it will not be black. In such a place as this it would be unnatural to speak *loud*, and consequently there cannot be a great degree of exterior animation. I believe my manner is always cool; this is not so happy, I confess; but it is nature, and all nature's opponents will be vanquished. . . . Paper fails—so here then concludes our letter; and I remain, much at your service,

THE KNIGHT OF THE ENCHANTED PEN.

XIV. TO MR. H. HORSFALL.

Newcastle, Oct. 4, 1792.

. . . If I were with you, I should set you an example of temperance which you would find it a piece of self-denial to imitate. "He that needs least is likest the gods," said Socrates, you know; and I have only to wish that Socrates were now alive, to be convinced it is possible for others to carry philosophy as far as himself. If Socrates, and I, and the Delphic oracle, had flourished all at the same time, would not the *last* have made a difficulty which of the two should be pronounced the Wisest of Men? or, at least, should not I have come in for the *second place*, if superior age and experience had at last given one step of precedence to my brother sage?

So far I had written on Thursday last, when the genius-enchanter, who has of late presided over my pen, and who sometimes inspirits it with fancy, and sometimes loads and trammels it with dulness, struck it with such a cold and deadly charm that I could write no farther. 'Tis now Monday—and I have heard nothing from you or from Brearley.

You are, to be sure, the most niggardly class of correspondents that ever lived; but as I love to assert independence, I will show that I can write whether you do or not. Odd fellows that you are—perhaps when I see you again, you will not *speak* reither. But I promise you I will make up your deficiencies; when I open my mouth in earnest, I assure you none of you bachelors shall be able to close it. I'll trumpet your characters with a vengeance! You shall hear how eloquently, and how sarcastically too, I can inveigh against stupidity, and insensibility, and unmeaning gravity, and important reserve, and all your ridiculous characteristics. Depend on it, I shall spread your *virtues* to the sun, and constrain even yourselves to behold them. I am always glad when I can catch a subject to talk about, and fortunately, in this respect, I shall be at no loss the next time I see you. Every trait of the face, every motion of the lips, every oddity in dress, and every word you pronounce, will afford me some curious thought; and thus I shall be able to tease you on every side with incessant remarks, some of which you shall not be able to understand, and others you will not like. Such treatment faithless and idle correspondents always deserve, and such politeness they shall always find me fairly disposed to exhibit. . . . Last week Mr. Fishwick and I rode to Tynemouth. We had two most noble horses, which carried us about nine miles an hour. I could boast of having nearly "drawn empyreal air," since sometimes in the course of the ride I had almost got above this atmosphere of ours. You would have been highly pleased with the grand view of the sea which I that day enjoyed. . . . Hearing nothing from you, I am entirely left to indulge my conjectures. I may continue to wonder whether you are alive or dead; whether you are tracing the paths of learning forward or backward; whether you are asleep or awake; whether you are married or free; whether you remember me or have forgotten me; whether you wish any more letters, or you had rather see a ghost; in short, whether you are the same man I once knew and esteemed, or, as H. Horsfall, you exist no more.

A fine young man, the son of Mr. Whitfield, the Baptist preacher, of whom you have heard, has just been with me here in my chamber for a long time, and a most agreeable

evening we have passed. He is a youth about twenty, of worthy principles and character, and of an ingenuous, sensible, and affectionate spirit. He has been recounting to me the scenes of past life, and pensively recalling several tender affairs. On the subject of the uncertainty of future prospects, our feelings seem very similar. . . . My quarter of a year will soon be finished; I know not what will be the result—I know what I *wish* to be the result.

XV. TO MR. H. HORSFALL.

Newcastle, Oct. 10, 1792.

No letter from Mr. Horsfall: I am left, therefore, to proceed without interruption. 'Tis true I have nothing of consequence to say; but there are some people to whom it is all the same whether one talk like a man of sense or a fool. They can hear a parson showing away in powder and ruffles—the quack doctor haranguing on diseases and pills—the veteran “shouldering his crutch, and telling how fields are won”—the barber edging his razor with his jest—the young lady giving new interest to a tender subject by the remarks which her feelings prompt—and the old wench telling a story of weddings and of witches,—all with the same undisturbed tranquillity of dulness. Virtue may triumph, or wickedness blaspheme; distress may supplicate and weep; injured innocence may remonstrate; industry may reprove, or gratitude may bless; the philosopher may reason, and the idiot may rave;—what is it all to them? The curious and the novel cannot seize attention; the grand finds no upper story above the kitchen-apartments of their minds; the tender cannot awake torpid sensibility; and the pathetic rebounds a league from their shielded hearts. All that I mean by this bustling page is, that there are *some* to whom it signifies nothing whether one write or speak sense or nonsense. Mind, I do not say that *you* are one of them. I only mean to say, that, idle, inattentive correspondents deserve to be punished twice a week with a nonsensical discourse on nonsense.

I have just received a most pleasing letter from Mr. Hughes.

He is still unmarried, and still the only tutor of the Academy. He flatters me by telling me that he feels the loss of me. I still admire him as much as ever. Each letter I have received from him indicates that energy of mind which genius alone can inspire. I shall to the end of life congratulate myself on having become acquainted with him. If I have attained any enlargement of ideas, I am in a very great degree indebted to him for the advantage. I should be most happy to see him again. . . . Do you read novels still? I sometimes think I will read no more; so many of them are romantic, and so many insipid. Besides, is there any such thing as learning the art or the science of *feeling*? I think the person who without reading novels would not be amiable and worthy, will never become such by reading them. I am too little in the habit of reading any thing; I must reform my plan.

You recollect the *waving motion* I used to have in reading or studying. I have it still, and I find it very injurious to my breast, but I know not how to get quit of it. I am anxious to be free from every disagreeable habit. How desirable a thing it is to be unexceptionable in all points. I hope it will not be long before I see you. The wintry season, I am afraid, will prevent the repetition of the *midnight ramble*. Really it was a pleasant adventure to me. . . . But at any rate we shall conjure up a little gaiety, I hope. . . .

XVI. TO MR. H. HORSFALL.

Newcastle, Nov. 9, 1792.

. . . . I think I used, when at Brearley, to express a degree of aversion to *children*; now, on the contrary, I seem to like them much. Yesterday evening I passed at the house of one of the most respectable of the people here; and spent almost half of the time in playing with two little girls. I assisted their pranks, and danced them about. I verily believe I should be no contemptible nurse. Lately I received a charming letter from Mr. Hughes; and yesterday I despatched for him a whole sheet of post paper,

written very full and close, and design to follow it with another, in similar style in a few days.

From my last to Mr. Fawcett, jun., you have perhaps heard the conclusion of the affair of Hull, and my present situation at Newcastle. I have nothing in expectation but returning to Yorkshire. . . . I abominate Hebden Bridge as much as you can do; but I shall, in case of being at Lanes, be near you, and Brearley, and Mount—circumstances in the highest degree pleasing. Christmas will not be distant in prospect, at the time I expect to reach you; and then you gentlemen will be at leisure; and if I am with you, I promise you will find me not the least forward, gay, and mischievous of the *posse*. What must it be that our wits united will not be capable of contriving? and what contrivance that our temerity will not be able to execute? Mr. G., sagacious and firm; Mr. —, delicately neutral (to serve as a ballast to our motions); you, regular and assiduous; myself, airy, and romantic. Depend upon it, the world will hear of us.

. . . . There is scarcely any enterprise from which, in speculation and fancy, I shrink. My object shall be through life, the *greatest good*, and I hold myself, and will ever hold myself, at liberty to seek it in *any line* that appears most promising; and so to change one line for another, when another more advantageous presents itself. Reason dictates not the superstitious notion that when you have applied yourself to one engagement, you must at all events adhere to it in life and death. Let the great design be conducted onward with ardour, but it may be conducted through various paths. You will tell me, that "he who has set his hand to the plough must not look back." Well, in this determination yourself cannot be firmer than I am. There is only one principle on which a good and a wise man can act, only one great end to pursue; but let not prescription interfere with reason and experiment in selecting the means. Preachers, like the poor, we are certain of heaving "always with us;" but characters of a description which I can conceive, are seen so seldom that they appear phenomena. Let prejudice and custom forbear to condemn, or know there are spirits that dread not their award. Let not the

displeasure of Heaven be denounced on designs which Heaven will approve.

XVII. TO MR. H. HORSFALL.

Newcastle, Nov. 12, 1792.

What art thou doing, most incorrigible of men? Once and again have I besought thee to write, but thou writest not. Is it that paralytic chains have confined thy hand? Is it that thou sleepest the perpetual sleep of Endymion? Is it that thy evil genius tears in pieces all the letters thou writest? Is it that thy preceptor hath taken away all thy pens and ink, that thou mayest be compelled better to mind thy book? . . . Message after message have not I sent? but, like that blustering Jehu of old, thou saidst to each of my messengers, "Get thee behind me," nor condescendedst to return one word of reply. Unrighteous fellow that thou art! thou renderest not to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, for know thou that I am a man of high respectableness; neither reachest thou up unto the honesty (low as that virtue is) of paying thy lawful debts; for but compare the number of letters thou hast received with the number of those thou hast written, and if thou hast sense to see the difference, thou wilt confess that I have unanswered claims on thee. What dost thou not deserve, thou ungrateful and idle dunce? At night let evil dreams be awake, while thou sleepest; strange and grievous indeed, the mischances that will vex thy sleeping hour! when thou fanciest thyself in act to utter speech of earnest meaning, in a twink fieth thy tongue out of thy head! . . . or, methinks, when thou imaginest thyself sat down to write Cupid's warm epistle, behold, Death, with his bony hand, taketh hold of thy fingers, and maketh thee scrawl thy last will and testament! But dost thou begin to laugh at me? O thou graceless varlet! Anon a more sober mood shall take thee. Best I should leave thee at present. But I will give thee a handful of grave reflections, on subjects indifferent, which I have just caught in a cow-house, a place in which such men as thou art fittest always to dwell.

Is pleasure willing to keep her assignations with thee

equally in an open cow-house and a decorated parlour? Thou art a happy man.

Dost thou behold goodness, though accompanied with vulgarity, with complacence; and baseness, though arrayed in elegance, with disgust? Thou art a happy man.

Dost thou behold inferior talents without vanity, and superior ones without envy? Thou art a happy man.

While thou art diffusing gay pleasure through thy social circle, and receiving pleasure from it, is thy cheerfulness undamped when thou observest Death drawing a chair, and taking a place among the company? Thou art a happy man.

Dost thou pray, not because thou darest curses, but because thou hopest blessings? Thou art a happy man.

Does not thy retrospect of regret, cast a shade over thy prospect of hope? Thou art a happy man.

Amidst prosperity, canst thou detect the futility of means which may have gained thee pleasure? in misfortune canst thou triumph in the rectitude of those measures of wisdom to which yet success may have been denied? Thou art a happy man.

Let the windows of thy soul, like the windows of a house, not disclose every thing *within*; but, at the same time, admit notices of every thing *without*.

Wiser reflections than these, if thou choosest, thou mayest make; if thou choosest, thou mayest impart them, too, for my improvement. But if thou still thinkest that I am unworthy to be the receptacle of thy wisdom, thou must give me leave to take myself out of thy presence, and to shut the door after me, while I am telling thee that

I am, thine to chastise thee,
J. FOSTER.

XVIII. TO THE REV. THOMAS LANGDON.

April 23, 1793.

. . . I well know by the same sympathetic feeling what must be your sentiments of concern for France. Its situation is indeed alarming. Still I cannot but hope that France has a triumph yet to come. I consider the tempestuous horror

that now overspreads the hemisphere, as the prelude to a long and effulgent day. It is most consolatory to reflect, that religion, like an angel walking among the ranks of guilty men, still untainted and pure, retains, amidst all these black and outrageous evils, the same benign and celestial spirit, and gives the same independent and perpetual pleasures. The happiness of the good seeks not the smile of guilty power, nor dreads its frown. Let a Christian philosophy therefore, elevate all our speculations, calm our indignant feelings, and dignify all our conduct. . . .

XIX. TO THE REV. THOMAS LANGDON.

Near Hebden Bridge, March 24, 1796.

I am gratified in a persuasion that I am not entirely forgotten at Leeds. But I wish I had either less occasion or more ingenuity, to make apology for that long silence which might seem to indicate oblivion, because it always accompanies it. The obstinate tendency to delay, and to neglect writing, adheres to me still, though attended with a force of regret, which should long ago have stimulated me to conquer it. I am not here acknowledging, and my heart firmly assures me that I need not acknowledge, a want or decline of gratitude and affection. No.

I have been a little more than a year at Dublin. Promise and friendship required me to write to you, yet I certainly had little worth notice to communicate. I prosecuted a good while the undertaking on which I went thither, but relinquished it at last as insufficient and unpromising. I preached not once the whole year. I have been here now something more than a month, and am generally very busy about literary schemes. I may perhaps sometime try the fate of an *author*.

I am informed you have resigned at least half the *cleric* character, by engaging in business. But I am informed, too, that you have now Mrs. Langdon at home. This sounds like the marvellous, indeed, but it is told on such authority that I am compelled to believe it. She will have the kindness to accept my sincere expressions of cordial affection and

esteem. Little Mary too; does she yet remember how I *frighted* her—and, if she remembers, can she forgive?

I intend in a while to venture on a walk to Leeds, and to make you a short sermon some Sunday morning; that is to say, if you will allow me to *ascend* the pulpit, and the people will allow me to remain there; for, in faith, my hair is—tied; and my waistcoat is—red. In the meantime I shall feel it very kind if you will favour me with half-a-sheet, to inform me whether you and your little family are well and happy; whether your business is attended with satisfactory success; whether our very excellent friends at Leeds are in the same circumstances as when I saw them; and whether the political spirit is quite evaporated. I should be very happy to be remembered to my friends, but cannot wish to subject you to the ceremonious formality of telling them so. . . .

The sentiments which Foster expresses in the foregoing letters on several important subjects were such as he maintained substantially in after life. The wish he avowed “to have a chapel of his own, without even the existence of what is called a church,” was not a transitory ebullition of juvenile sentiment. At a much later period, on the occasion of a violent dissension between two religious societies, which came under his immediate notice, he speaks of “obtaining plenty of confirmation, if he had needed it, of his old opinion, that churches are useless and mischievous institutions, and the sooner they are dissolved the better.”* The general tenor of his language implied a disapproval of any organized religious community. He believed that there was

* “I think,” Mr. Hughes replied, “your conclusion strange. To be sure, if there were no churches, there would be no ecclesiastical squabbles; and it may be added, if there were no states, there would be no civil broils; and if there were no vegetable productions, there would be no deadly night-shade; and if there were no water, no one would be drowned; and if there were no fire, no one would be consumed; and if there were no victuals, no one would be choked. Church-framers may egregiously err; but when you scout the whole tribe, and all their works, tell us how we ought to proceed; make out a strong case, and say at least that the way you would substitute would be free from the objections that cling to the old ways, and would secure greater advantages.”

more of appearance than of reality in the union of church-membership; and that, at all events, its benefits were greatly overrated. With the exception of public worship and the Lord's Supper, he was averse to everything institutional in religion. He never administered, nor even witnessed in mature life (it is believed), the ordinance of baptism, and was known to entertain doubts respecting its perpetuity. In writing to a friend (Sept. 10, 1828), he says, "I have long felt an utter loathing of what bears the general denomination of the *church*, with all its parties, contests, disgraces, or honours. My wish would be little less than the dissolution of all church institutions, of all orders and shapes; that *religion* might be set free, as a grand spiritual and moral element, no longer clogged, perverted, and prostituted, by corporation forms and principles."

It would probably not be difficult to account for Foster's laying an almost exclusive stress on the personal convictions and spiritual state of the individual, and attaching a very subordinate value to the social and outward offices of the church. It was not to be expected that he would strongly feel the need of the social element in religion, or seek in its public exercises for companionship and sympathy, when from constitutional shyness, combined with a very discriminating perception of character, and a high standard of personal attainment, he sought no such aid in other things. It might be anticipated, that (as was the case) his piety would be meditative, imaginative, self-enclosed, and, in reference to his fellow men, self-dependent. The following remarks from his "*Journal*" will illustrate this part of his character. "I like all persons as subjects of speculation; few indeed as objects of affection!"* "I cultivate society for some definite purpose; either, first, for animated interest—affection; or, secondly, for utility—beneficent influence,

* No. 529.

even when I do not feel sentiment or complacency. (Illustrative parallel in the structure of Rousseau's *Eloisa*.) For a middle state of feeling between these two—the acquaintance feeling—I have no faculty.”* “One is not one's genuine self—one does not disclose all one's self—to those with whom one has no intimate sympathy. One is, therefore, several successive, and apparently different characters, according to the gradation of the faculties and qualities of those one associates with. I am like one of those boxes I have seen, enclosing several other boxes of similar form, though lessening size. The person with whom I have least congeniality sees only the outermost; another person has something more interesting in his character, he sees the next box; another sees still an inner one; but the friend of my heart alone, with whom I have a full sympathy, sees disclosed the innermost of all. The colours of these successive boxes may vary—my various characters may have various aspects—and so the several judgments formed of me by the different persons may be various even to contradiction, yet each be apparently true.”†

In the formation of his political opinions, Foster pursued, as far as his immediate connections were concerned, a solitary course. His estimable tutor, Dr. Fawcett, had a settled reverence for the existing order of things, and a dread of innovation;‡ while his younger friends were of temperaments better fitted to cool down his enthusiasm, than to render it more intense by the addition of their own.§

* No. 673.

† No. 607.

‡ “No politics at Brearley. If you should happen to mention Paine on the Rights of Man, they look at you in such a manner, that you are constrained to recollect and ask yourself whether you have been swearing.” —*Mr. Foster to the Rev. T. Langdon, Dec. 1792.*

§ “My parents were highly excellent, eminent examples of piety and conscientiousness, but they were disproportionately older than myself, and they were not, especially my father, in sympathy with that *wildish* spirit of politics, liberty, and the French Revolution with which I was on fire.

Perhaps the germ of his anti-aristocratical principles might have been discovered in the youthful indignation with which he reprobated the grasping selfishness of the landowners in his neighbourhood. He usually finished his invectives by saying, "I would rather starve than receive anything at their hands." The anticipations of a general political amelioration which the French Revolution excited in so many ardent and philanthropic spirits, made him a decided republican. But though he "never ceased to regard royalty, and all its gaudy paraphernalia, as a sad satire on the human race,"* his attachment to republicanism underwent some modification in the course of years. A deeper insight into human nature made him less sanguine of the beneficial working of *any* political system: he looked more to individual efforts—to education in the most comprehensive sense, and to the efficacy of Christian principles in the renovation of mankind. "While the nature of man is corrupt," he remarks in his essay on the Epithet Romantic, "it will pervert even the very schemes and operations by which the world would be improved, though their first principles were pure as heaven; and revolutions, great discoveries, augmented science, and new forms of polity will become in effect what may be denominated, the sublime mechanics of depravity."

Nor were the two or three respectable young men of my acquaintance, made of the inflammable materials."—*Mr. Foster to the Rev. Josiah Hill, 1842.*

* Letter to John Purser, Esq., Feb. 22, 1842. "Not however," Mr. F. adds, "that I am a violent republican. No form of government will be practically good, as long as the nations to be governed are in a controversy, by their vices and irreligion, with the supreme Governor."

CHAPTER III.

CHICHESTER—BATTERSEA—DOWNEND—LITERARY PURSUITS
—ESSAY ON THE GREATNESS OF MAN—JOURNAL.

1797—1803.

EARLY in 1797 Mr. Foster was invited to become the minister of a General Baptist church at Chichester. He remained there about two years and a half, and applied himself with greater earnestness than at any former period to his ministerial duties; usually preaching three times on the Sunday, and in various ways striving to promote the piety and general improvement of the congregation. But though treated with much personal kindness, he met with little encouragement to prosecute his labours. A spirit of religious indifference seems to have pervaded the society; frequent deaths and removals reduced its numbers, and not long after his departure it became extinct. The chapel has since been only occasionally used by other denominations. Of Foster's hearers but few now survive who were then of an age to retain a recollection of his person and habits. A walk in the vicinity of the town is still known by his name; but his most favourite resort for meditation was the chapel, where the well-worn bricks of the aisles still exhibit the vestiges of his solitary paces to and fro by moonlight.

That no proposals to take the pastoral office were made to Mr. Foster, either at Dublin or Newcastle, will not appear surprising to the readers of the correspondence, in which he lays open his character and views with so much ingenuousness. His recluse habits, his peculiar style of

preaching, less adapted, probably, than at any subsequent period to popular or useful effect, and especially the fluctuating, unconfirmed state of his own mind,—all these circumstances would conspire, with his latitudinarian opinion respecting churches, to render it unlikely that, though he would always secure the admiration and attachment of a select few, the general suffrage would be in his favour; or, if it were, that he would accede to its decision.

It is, however, most interesting to mark his gradual advance, morally and intellectually, under a process of severe self-discipline; and, above all, the increasing intensity of his religious convictions. The disclosures made in his letters from Chichester and Battersea of the interior sentiments of his heart, the profound regrets, the earnest resolves, and the fervent aspirations after “perfection as it shines beauteous as heaven; and, alas! as remote,” present an *æra* in his spiritual life, which no Christian mind can contemplate without the deepest sympathy.

It would be unpardonable not to notice the inestimable benefit derived by Foster from his friendship with Mr. Hughes; and it increases not a little the debt of gratitude due from the Christian community to that excellent man, that though his own authorship was limited to a few fugitive productions, and his sphere of duty was one of action rather than of meditation, he performed the noble office of stimulating the exertions and cherishing the piety of one of the most original and influential religious writers of his age.

From some passages in these letters it will be seen that Foster began very early the cultivation of his conversational powers, instead of leaving this invaluable instrument of social pleasure and improvement to the casual excitement of circumstances. The result was such as might be expected from a mind which was receiving constant accessions from observation and reflection. No one could be on terms of

familiar intercourse with Foster without being struck with his affluence of thought and imagery, and the readiness with which the most insignificant object or incident was taken as a kind of nucleus, on which was rapidly formed an assemblage of original remarks. There was scarcely any subject (except the purely scientific or philological) on which it was not enough simply to touch, and immediately the stream would gush forth.

But to return to the narrative. About Midsummer, 1799, Mr. Foster left Chichester, and resided for a time with Mr. Hughes at Battersea. He explains the nature of his engagements in a letter to his friend Mrs. Mant, with whom he resided at Chichester. "In one way or another," he says,* "I have been rather busy most of the time since I came hither. Many evenings I have spent in interesting company. I have preached several of the sabbaths, and made a journey of perhaps forty miles in the country to preach to *heathens*, at one place, in a sort of coal-hole; and to plain, good saints at another, in a little shop. I stood behind the counter, and some of the candles hanging above touched my wig. I should extremely like to preach in this style every evening in the week. This was not a casual adventure of my own; there has been for some time past a regular plan, which they call a mission, in which a considerable number of preachers are employed to go round the country to obscure places, where the gospel scarcely ever went before, and endeavour to establish a kind of religious posts.—For two weeks I have been engaged, and shall remain so for some time, in another piece of business, of which I had no expectation when I left you. The Company who made some time since an establishment at Sierra Leone in Africa, have brought to England twenty black boys to receive European improvements, in order to be sent back

* To Mrs. Mant, July 23, 1799.

when they are come to be men, to attempt enlightening the heathen nations of Africa. They have been placed in a house at Battersea, for the present, till some kind of regular and permanent establishment shall be formed; and I have been requested, and have agreed, to take the care of them for a few months. You may then fancy me sitting in a master's chair, with a look of consequence, encircled with twenty-one black visages, pronouncing commands, asking questions, and *graciously* administering instructions,—a most monstrous wise man compared with my pupils. Most of them have been several years instructed in a school at Sierra Leone before they came, and consequently speak English perfectly well. Their ages are chiefly from nine or ten to fifteen or sixteen. The domestic manager is an aged black woman, with her daughter. The elder is a singularly pious and happy woman. She has been in different parts of the world, has undergone severe trials, but professes to have felt, and evidently now feels, a degree of devout resignation and serenity most rarely to be met with. Just at present I have found it most convenient to board with her and her daughter, a girl of about, I should suppose, twenty."

Writing again to the same friend, December 31, 1799, he says, "I am just about the end of my engagement with the Africans, with whom I had at first no expectation of continuing half so long. My successor is one of my own most particular friends, with whom I spent several years in Yorkshire. The places where we were born are not more than half a mile from each other. I shall now have an interval of comparative leisure, which I must employ in writing my long-neglected letters, and in studying a number of sermons to furnish myself for a preaching expedition, which I expect to make a month or two hence. But this severe season is miserably unfavourable to sedentary mental

exercise. I have, too, passed so much time in pleasing society of late, that I am afraid I may not like solitude again as well as I used to do. The principal improvement I have gained here has been in respect of manners, conversation, habits, deportment, &c. &c., for I have had little time for reading or downright study. Nor, though I have frequently taken a walk into London, for the sake of hearing some distinguished preacher, have I seen anything at all of its wonderments, not even Fuseli's pictures from Milton, which cannot now be seen, as the exhibition is shut up a good while since."

Up to the period of leaving Chichester, Foster's intercourse with cultivated persons had been very limited. But on his removal to Battersea, and soon after in the neighbourhood of Bristol, he was introduced to several individuals of refined taste and superior intelligence. It is said by those who then knew him, that his manners were vivacious, and his society in a high degree captivating; his conversation was ardent, intellectual, and imaginative, with no faint colouring of the romantic. His outward appearance was not thought by him so unworthy of care as in later life he looked on such matters, in relation to himself especially. At the residence of the late Samuel Favell, Esq., of Camberwell, he first met Miss Maria Snooke, "the friend" to whom his essays were addressed, who some years afterwards became his wife, and in that relation contributed so largely to his happiness by an extraordinary congeniality, which eminently fitted her to be his "domestic associate."

In 1800 he removed to the village of Downend, five miles from Bristol, where he preached regularly at a small chapel erected by Dr. Caleb Evans. Towards the close of the year he paid a visit to Mrs. Mant, at Chichester, to whom, on his return, he thus writes: "I am still in the same house, but shall remove almost immediately, I expect, into a

quiet, retired house in the neighbourhood, inhabited by a respectable and agreeable widow, who has several daughters. There I mean to devote myself, in a great measure, to retirement and reflection. . . . When I left you, I walked, as I intended, to Portsmouth. I felt a pensiveness and oppression of heart from quitting you and the Westgate friends, which made me glad of the solitude, the exercise, and the free air. The Dearlings were kind to me in an extreme degree during the whole of my visit. I sympathized¹ with the feelings caused by their lamented loss. I spent three or four days at Portsmouth, where I met a cordially kind reception among my few friends. I preached on the Sunday. From Portsmouth I travelled by Southampton, Salisbury, Devizes, Warminster, and Bath, to Bristol. The journey was slow, and, for the most, dull and unsocial. At Salisbury, indeed, where I had to remain at an inn from five in the evening till one or two in the morning, I passed this entire interval in the most vigorous exertion of talking with a number of gentlemen of various characters, some of them sensible, and chiefly inhabitants of the town, on subjects of politics, morals, and literature. When I got hither, I received a sharp lecture or two on account of having been away so long, and particularly of not having written any account of myself for many weeks. . . I have formed no new acquaintance here, nor wish for any. Coleridge is, I am told, returning from the north to reside near London."

In the autumn of 1801, Foster visited for the last time his friends and relatives in Yorkshire; he gives the following account of his journey in a letter to Mr. Hughes: "I travelled straightforward to my native place, without stopping, excepting the nights, on the road—a space of three days. Part of the country I passed through was more in the style of Eden than anything I ever saw, from the infinitude of fruits. I found my father, who is past seventy, in

a very feeble state, but full as well as I expected. My mother is within a few years of that age, and very much declined since I saw her last. My brother has been married two or three years, and has a pretty little girl, with which I played, and was extremely delighted. That pleasure so often celebrated in visiting the scenes of nativity, childhood, and youth, I was never destined to feel. From whatever cause; I have had an intense antipathy to the place for many years, and felt no pleasure, with the exception of a wild, solitary vale or two, in re-treading the ancient vestiges. Few local circumstances befriended the romantic feelings of my early youth; they did not therefore attach themselves to the place, but were enclosed within myself, and carried away. . . . I had quite a stranger's experience in respect of the inhabitants; they are so changed since I last saw the place, by the death of most of my old acquaintance, and the manhood of a multitude who then appeared children. Much cordiality was evinced by the generality, and especially by those who had at all cared about me before: this was some small alleviation of the deep sombre that dyed all my perceptions. I preached several times with considerable *éclat* for Mr. Fawcett, who is much the same in each respect as ever. I did not go near Leeds, nor therefore see anything of Langdon, nor any others, besides the immediate neighbourhood of my father's.

"In returning, I stopped three or four pleasant days at Pershore, chiefly with Rowland, who is agreeably settled there. . . [He] seems a respectable, a very respectable preacher, and is, for an orthodox man, of unparalleled candour. My reception was extremely friendly, both from him and the few others who well remembered me.

"I reached Downend at last, a day or two before Mrs. Cox, who had a little before seen you, and told me that you appeared lively and friendly, and that she had heard you

make a transcendent sermon at Broad Street, the same, I believe, that I heard at Thornbury. . . . I was two or three times in Hall's company, and heard him preach once; I am any one's rival in admiring him. In some remarkable manner, everything about him, all he does or says, *is instinct with power*. Jupiter seems to emanate in his attitude, gesture, look, and tone of voice. Even a common sentence, when he utters one, seems to tell how much more he can do. His intellect is peculiarly potential, and his imagination robes, without obscuring, the colossal form of his mind. He made a grand sermon on the fear of death, though I was told it was not his very best. . . . He was specifically kind to me. . . . I have engaged in the monthly lecture in Bristol for the next year."

LETTERS.

XX. TO HIS PARENTS.

Chichester, March 27, 1797.

HONOURED PARENTS,—I hope to attain in time the power which can create for itself interests and varieties which the place will not supply, and can therefore communicate something new while circumstances continue the same. I feel no considerable alteration in mine. I have seen nothing remarkable since I wrote; have heard nothing but those public events which you have likewise heard: have *done* nothing of great consequence. I have indeed *said* a number of new, and perhaps important things. I mean to recollect and write as many of them as I can for preservation; but my memory seems growing worse and worse. On this account I frequently now write out the outlines of my discourses, previous to speaking, a practice which I had long disused. I am become a little more acquainted with the people, and find them thus far very pleasing; but I do not

need to be informed that the attentions and politeness of a first acquaintance do not continue always. I resolve, however, to *merit* respect wherever I am, and then I shall at least possess *my own*. I know what are the qualities and conduct which deserve the esteem of society and promote its happiness; and while each cause of irritation is absent, I can wonder that every mortal is not inclined to study the happiness of those around him, and that I myself have not, in some instances, made greater efforts and sacrifices for this object. Some time since, I was most of the week seven miles from here, at the house of a miller. . . . I read there with great pleasure the sermons of Fawcett, the presbyterian, of London. My own most successful compositions are considerably similar, but inferior to his. He is not indeed sufficiently evangelical. The two last weeks I passed with another family in the city, in which there are several very agreeable young people. I am conscious of having made an effort, a laborious effort, to render them some service. I read several books to them, and compelled myself to talk. I tried to communicate knowledge, and to excite a wish to attain it. To one of them particularly, a fine young woman, I lectured with all my might on the value of wisdom, the necessity of reflection, and the folly of dress, amusements, and trivial society. In such cases I always feel indignant at myself that I cannot absolutely compel conviction by a resistless force of argument. I never fail, however, to do my best, and to resolve to furnish myself with new and more cogent thoughts against the next occasion. . . . Since I came, one member of the society, a woman with a large family, is dead. I was requested to make a funeral discourse, in doing which I was exempted from the task of speaking of the deceased, by being a total stranger. I never even saw her. I thought the sermon the most considerable I ever made. Writing to Mr. Hughes, I transcribed and sent him the introduction by way of return for his outline, which I had used. The text was, "The living know that they shall die."* I experience the accustomed diversities of enlargement and contraction in public speaking. It is still an

* There can be little doubt that this introduction forms the first extract in the following communication from Mr. Hughes to the Editor of the

interesting problem with me, whether zealous animation be attainable when nature has not given it; but I am yet

(Edinburgh) *Missionary Magazine*, which was inserted in the twenty-ninth number of that periodical, October, 1798.

"To the Editor of the Missionary Magazine.

"SIR,—I have had frequent occasion to remark, that while scepticism, error, indifference, and vagueness of belief, are the luxuriant produce of thoughtless minds, and of gay moments, nothing short of a fixed confidence, derived, if I may so speak, from the very centre of the gospel, can satisfy the man who, in the views of approaching death, sits in solemn judgment upon himself. The idle glare of a pompous philosophy, and the flattery of a deceitful heart, vanish, and some beamings of truth, some profitable regrets, some eager wishes, have been known to fill their place. These reflections are suggested by the following passages, extracted from the letter of an ingenious friend, whose speculations habitually hover over an undefined void, and feed upon a vexatious disappointment, their own creation. The extracts breathe the spirit of some happier hour; and should they be deemed likely to fix the undetermined or to reclaim the wanderer, should they in any sense comport with the design of your miscellany, their insertion will much oblige your well-wisher,

"THEOLOGUS.

" ' REFLECTIONS ON DEATH.

" ' The records of time are emphatically the history of death. A whole review of the world, from this hour to the age of Adam, is but the vision of an infinite multitude of dying men. During the more quiet intervals, we perceive individuals falling into the dust, through all classes and all lands. Then come floods and conflagrations, famines, and pestilence, and earthquakes, and battles, which leave the most crowded and social scenes silent. The human race resemble the withered foliage of a wide forest; while the air is calm, we perceive single leaves scattering here and there from the branches; but sometimes a tempest, or a whirlwind, precipitates thousands in a moment. It is a moderate computation which supposes a hundred thousand millions to have died since the exit of righteous Abel. Oh! it is true that ruin hath entered the creation of God! that sin has made a breach in that innocence which fenced man round with immortality! and even now the great spoiler is ravaging the world. As mankind have still sunk into the dark gulf of the past, history has given buoyancy to the most wonderful of their achievements and characters, and caused them to float down the stream of time to our own age. It is well; but if, sweeping aside the pomp and deception of life, we could draw from the last hours and death-beds of our ancestors all the illuminations, convictions, and uncontrollable emotions with which they have quitted it, what a far more affecting history of man should we possess! Behold all the gloomy apartments opening, in which the wicked have died; contemplate first the triumph of iniquity, and here behold their close; witness the terrific faith, the too late repentance, the prayers suffocated by despair, and the mortal agonies! These once they would not believe; they refused to consider

willing to persuade myself that it is. I hold it my business to make the experiment. This animation *must* prevail as

them; they could not allow that the career of crime and pleasure was to end. But now truth, like a blazing star, darts over the mind, and but shows the way to that, 'darkness visible' which no light can cheer. Dying wretch! we say in imagination to each of these, Is religion true? Do you believe in a God, and another life, and a retribution? 'O yes!' he answers, and expires! But 'the righteous hath hope in his death.' Contemplate, through the unnumbered saints that have died, the soul, the true and inextinguishable life of man, charmed away from this globe by celestial music, and already respiring the gales of eternity! If we could assemble in one view all the adoring addresses to the Deity, all the declarations of faith in Jesus, all the gratulations of conscience, all the admonitions and benedictions to weeping friends, and all the gleams of opening glory, our souls would burn with the sentiment which made the wicked Balaam devout for a moment, and exclaim: 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.' These revelations of death would be the most emphatic commentary on the revelation of God. What an affecting scene is a dying world! Who is that destroying angel whom the Eternal has employed to sacrifice all our devoted race? Advancing onward over the whole field of time, he hath smitten the successive crowds of our hosts with death; and to *us* he now approaches nigh. Some of our friends have trembled, and sickened, and expired, at the signals of his coming; already we hear the thunder of his wings; soon his eye of fire will throw mortal fainting on all our companies; his prodigious form will to us blot out the sun, and his sword sweep us all from the earth; 'for the living know that they shall die.'

"Such are my friend's reflections on death. I subjoin the following as the more affecting statement of his own feelings; hoping it may serve to correct that lawless elation, and that superiority to evangelical control, which in our ingenious youth we have so often reason to deplore.

" 'I know not, I wonder how I shall succeed in mental improvement, and especially in religion. Oh, it is a difficult thing to be a Christian! I feel the necessity of reform through all my soul. When I retire into thought, I find myself environed by a crowd of impressive and awful images; I fix an ardent gaze on Christianity, assuredly the last best gift of Heaven to men; on Jesus the agent and example of infinite love; on time as it passes away; on perfection as it shines beauteous as heaven, and alas! as remote; on my own beloved soul which I have injured, and on the unhappy multitude of souls around me; and I ask myself, Why do not my passions burn? Why does not zeal arise in mighty wrath, to dash my icy habits in pieces, to scourge me from indolence into fervid exertion, and to trample all mean sentiments in the dust? At intervals I feel devotion and benevolence, and a surpassing ardour; but when they are turned towards substantial, laborious operation, they fly and leave me spiritless amid the iron labour. Still, however, I do confide in the efficacy of persisitive prayer; and I do hope that the Spirit of the Lord will yet come mightily upon me, and carry me on through toils, and suffering, and death, to stand in Mount Zion among the followers of the Lamb!'

far as devotion does; and who shall mark the limits beyond which devotion shall not prevail?

I often contemplate, and with the due amazement, the characters of Moses, and Elijah, and St. Paul, and St. John, with the rest who have formed the first and noblest rank of mankind. I have wondered whether there is in the nature of things, an impossibility of ever approaching them. But I have concluded with warmth that all things should be attempted, should be suffered, should be sacrificed, in the divine emulation of imitating them. I am happy to believe that great and unknown assistance is imparted by Heaven to the zealots of such a cause. Oh that permanence could be given to the ardent feelings which these contemplations, at intervals, inspire!

If I ever, as to the speaking part, perform well in public, I shall have surmounted prodigious difficulty. Reading aloud is a perfect purgatory. My tongue rubs against my teeth like Balaam's ass against the wall, and will not, cannot, perform the movement which its master requires. Yet for the sake of improvement, I mean frequently to read to Mrs. Kingsford, if she will hear me. I have plenty of books at command.

Next to an improved and happy state of my own mind, what I most want, and here probably must not find, is a companion of originality and genius, with whom I might expatiate on the intellectual field, and interchange sentiments which the majority of men would not understand. I should be greatly happy to be within reach of Mr. Hughes. My life hitherto has been most inauspicious to the most interesting kinds of human attachment. . . . I am tolerably social; partly from inclination, and partly from a consideration of propriety; yet solitude is my paradise. Besides, necessity will concur with disposition, if my literary projects are prosecuted into any success. I am sorry that the circumstances and very small number of young persons that are likely to come within my acquaintance here, give at present no encouragement to try my favourite plan of a lecture, or whatever else it might be called. I observe too that if I *were* to execute it, it must be very different from what it ought to be in a country place like Hebden Bridge, on account of the very different circumstances and habits

of the young people in a city. Folly has a much greater variety of modes than absolute vice can take. Here I must lecture against artificial manners, and insincerity, and affectation, and ceremony, and cards, and the whole routine of polished insipidity, for which this place is remarkable.

The clergy here are for the most part, it seems, a very worthless clan, though all people seem to agree in marking one honourable exception, highly honourable for his talents, virtuous conduct, liberality, and zealous activity; his name is Walker. He was one of my hearers yesterday evening. I should not be sorry to become acquainted with him, but I am little inclined to *court* any man's acquaintance.

. . . . I and a young man of the family I was with last week, propose a week or two hence to make a forced march to Salisbury, between forty and fifty miles from here, principally to see the famous Stonehenge. I am endeavouring, wherever I am, to examine every object with the keenest investigation, conscious that this is the best of all methods for obtaining knowledge fresh and original. It was by this method that Dr. Johnson was empowered to display human characters in his *Rambler*, and Thomson to describe Nature in his *Seasons*. It is impossible to adapt many kinds of instruction with precision, without that minute and uncommon knowledge which observation alone can supply.

I frequently form conjectures about you and my friends in the neighbourhood, all in vain. There are indeed no more young marriages left to be imagined (unless it be that of Thomas); "I alone am escaped." How different it is from the time when Greaves, Fawcett, Horsfall, and myself were all associate boys, touched with that kind of sentiment which Hope alone gives; possession, I believe, has no sentiment so animated. Respecting them there seems nothing to imagine, nothing to inquire, nothing to learn. They have obtained what they wanted in life, and now are quiet, and wish to sit down free from further change. My feelings are almost infinitely different. And though it would be pleasing to see a kind of certainty of some happy circumstances in future, yet I am very far indeed from wishing to discern through the gloom, the wall, the limit that is to bound my scope. I have long wished, as one of

the sublimest means of enjoyment, to obtain a habitual indifference to life itself, and am firmly of opinion that to a good man there can be nothing so happy in life as a noble occasion of throwing it away. Thomas is always remembered by me with affectionate regard. I constantly wish and pray for the happiness of you all, and shall be glad to learn how far you possess it. . . .

XXI. TO HIS PARENTS.

Chichester, December 6, 1797.

HONOURED PARENTS,—I have just been admiring the marvellous construction of the mind, in the circumstance of its enabling me, as I sit by my candle here, in a chamber at Chichester, to view almost as distinctly, as if before my eyes, your house, the barn, the adjacent fields, neighbouring houses, and a multitude of other objects. I can go through each part of the house, and see the exact form of the looms, tables, maps, cakes of bread, and so on, down to my mother's thimble. Yet I still find myself almost three hundred miles off. At present I take no notice of the things about me; but perhaps at some future time, at a still greater distance, I may thus review, in imagination, the room in which I now write, and the objects it contains; and I find that few places where I have continued some time, can be thus recollected without some degree of regret; particularly the regret that I did not obtain and accomplish all the good that was possible at that place, and that time. Will it be so when hereafter I recollect *this* time, and this place? I have just been reading an author who maintains, with very great force of reasoning, *that no man could in any situation, have acted differently from what he has done*. Though I do not see how to refute his arguments, I feel as if I ought to differ from his opinion. He refers to Jonathan Edwards as a powerful advocate of the same doctrine. He says such an expression as "*I will exert myself*," is absurd. It is an expression which, notwithstanding, I am inclined to repeat, as I view the wide field of duty before me. My hope of success, however, with respect to some of the ob-

jects of exertion, is but small. I preach now three times on the Sunday; I study my sermons more than in any former season. They are too, I believe, more than in any former season, what may be termed evangelical. For the most part I think them considerably good; but I do not form this judgment from their *effect*; *that* appears to be very small. Religion here seems to have been forced into an unnatural and accommodating mixture with the world, from which no representations can reclaim it. How far the prevailing spirit may have an influence on *myself*, I cannot exactly know, unless I were to pass into the sphere of an opposite influence. It must be great energy that can absolutely vanquish the influences of situation. I find, at least, that I have not lost the power of seeing what is wrong in others, and feeling what is wrong in myself. I told you that the "old people in the society were dying fast away." Two of them (women) are dead since I wrote so. One of them was a person of property, and what was called one of the principal people here. She had considerable sense, was a violent democrat, &c., &c.; but I remember her with but a very small degree of respect. She always treated me in a very friendly manner; but she was a bigot and a miser. I tell the people that I deem covetousness one of the very worst of vices. But those on whom particularly I wish to impress this truth "never heed me," as the old fellow said about wasting the gunpowder. The other was a person of a very good inoffensive kind of character. I made what is called a funeral sermon on her account. The object of it was to answer this simple question, "What is it to be prepared to die?" I attempted to show that a complete preparation for death must consist in three plain things; first, faith in Jesus Christ; second, a devout and pure state of mind; third, a truly Christian or virtuous conduct. I learnt that the sermon was one of the most popular I have made. The mortality in the society within the last two years, has been extraordinary. There are no substitutes in the same families, to fill the abdicated places. Instead of that, some of the surviving relatives have removed to different situations, and left a melancholy and chilling show of vacant seats. I think the society is hastening to dissolution with a progress that no revival is likely to retard.

Fate has fixed her seal. I was one Sunday, about a month since, at Portsmouth, and preached twice. I fell among two or three uncommonly agreeable and sensible families; but the society and congregation there are in the same frost-bitten state as here. I continue in health, meet with a continuance of friendly attention, live still in the same manner, have no want of books, and have a very decent wardrobe. I do not employ much time in visits, because generally I do not find that I can employ it to any valuable purpose. I used to tell you when in Lanes, that I never lost time when in company; and this was true. But here company is generally of a kind to make me most sincerely regret that I cannot visit and talk at *Cars*. For the most part I find conversation a mere chat about trifles, and the custom is so obstinate that I can seldom succeed to make it any thing else. I believe I rarely fail to make an effort this way. Often I make a very vigorous one, not only for the sake of conscience, but because my mind, accustomed to interesting sentiments, needs them to gratify its taste, which nauseates inspidity. Often I have had occasion to look round on a company with mingled wonder and contempt, to observe the conversation for ever stealing away from the neighbourhood of important subjects, to seek its element among the most insignificant ones. The fault is not mine; there are few articles in which I feel myself so clear of guilt. Probably I told you that the situation gave me no scope for executing my project of a course of addresses to young persons. Some time since, when thinking of one particular young person, it occurred to me that it might be of some use to arrange my reflections on some important subjects in a series of letters, and address them to that individual. The person is a young woman, the daughter of one of the poor members of the society, a person to whom such a service, if I can render it a service, will be very seasonable. If I continue here long enough to finish the series, and if it be tolerably satisfactory to myself, it may be possible to make further use of it.*

I sometimes feel convictions, impressive even to violence, of the duty of doing all the good I possibly can. The single idea of philanthropy is inspiring and grand; but I

* Journal, Nos. 500 and 734.

perceive that the practical detail of toils and self-denials opens a view very different from the first flash of the subject. Certainly, however, I have no determination more fixed and animated than that of devoting myself to the service of mankind. My father's favourite sentence is cordially mine, "The noblest motive is the public good." I am willing to indulge a favourable conjecture respecting your health, your circumstances, and business; but I feel it would be absurd to be sanguine. What is the opinion about national matters among you now? Does any one persist to dissuade from thinking of them; and talk of leaving them to the management of those who are *appointed* to manage them, &c.? The crisis seems fast approaching that will *compel* to think and to feel, and perhaps to act too. The infatuation of thoughtless acquiescence has prevailed wretchedly too long. Fox has assured us that to talk any longer about *parliament* is idle; and that the nation must exert itself, or prepare to suffer the consequences of its opprobrious tameness. My reflections are sometimes very serious on the question of what would be my duty in the event of a French army appearing on our plains. In all events I commend you and myself to Heaven.

XXII. TO HIS PARENTS.

Chichester, Feb. 12, 1798.

HONOURED PARENTS,—... I wish I could inform you of wonderful changes in myself,—changes which I have long projected, which I believe to be possible, which are extremely necessary, which I am still labouring, but of which the advances are but gradual and but slow. Yet I am highly pleased to feel that they *are* somewhat advancing. I am acquiring something of that *military discipline of thought**

* "A rational repast;
Exertion, vigilance, a mind in arms,
A military discipline of thought,
To foil temptation in the doubtful field;
And ever-waking ardour for the right."

Yours.—Night 8.

and action, which I suppose will be indispensable through the whole of life; and in this supposition I am glad that life is but short. I sometimes study, and pray, and talk, with such an exceeding ardour, that if it could but be constant I should soon become an eminent Christian, and an eminent man. My great fault is a tendency (I hope not an incorrigible tendency) to indolent languor. The attainment, if possible, of habitual energy, I feel to be an urgent duty, and an exceeding difficulty. For this purpose I endeavour to assemble a host of impressive considerations around my mind to compel it to activity. It is very unfortunate that many of the circumstances that surround me are not of a kind to act in alliance with these stimulating considerations. A situation where there is nothing lively, will, to a certain degree, inevitably infect one with its dulness. There are situations in the world that would probably aid and augment that fire of mind which the influence of my present one rather tends to quench. But I shall not abandon the generous strife. I still possess what may be called invariable health, my diet continues of the same inexpensive kind; water is still my drink. I congratulate myself often on the superiority in this respect which I shall possess in a season of difficulty over many that I see. I could, if necessary, live with philosophic complacency on bread and water, on herbs, or on sour milk with the Tartars.

. . . . I have a coat sufficiently grave—a dark brownish grey—with a black velvet collar. Every article of clothing is here expensive in the extreme, and yet nowhere can it be more necessary to dress well. It is what may be called a very elegant and fashionable place, and not large enough, like London, Dublin, Bristol, &c., for a man to lose himself in it, so as to be easy and unnoticed. At present I see very little indeed of what is called company. The persons are very few whom my ecclesiastical engagement brings me acquainted with, and I am little inclined to seek many others.

I am beginning to learn the French language, with a very sensible emigrant priest for my tutor. Such an accomplishment may be of special use ere while. The course of my preaching and reading does not materially alter. I have

spent rather too many hours in bed this winter, but shall not so misspend many more; I mean when it becomes warmer to go and bathe and swim in the sea.

I lately heard from Mr. Hughes, who, with his family, are as well as usual. He has abandoned his education project. He expresses himself pleased and useful in his preaching work. He is engaged in a kind of mission, or plan of travelling to different places to preach, in the county of Surrey. He writes in a strain of animated piety,—and exhorts me to the same.

My thoughts often revert to political subjects. The ominous aspect of the times both illustrates and augments their importance. If these subjects had gained the general attention of the people sufficiently much, and sufficiently early, affairs would not have come to the execrable condition we now behold them in. While men have slept the tares have been sown,* and now threaten to yield a harvest of death. The consequences of contented ignorance can never be good. The enormous guilt of such a war without, and of such oppression and corruption within, is chiefly chargeable on the thoughtless indifference of the people at large. If a nation will not be vigilant, it must be content to be betrayed. No part of the fault is mine.

In this quarter opinions differ as to an invasion. The intention of the French, however, seems evidently to be most serious and determined. If so, unless the elements again disappoint them, it must be a terrible kind of opposition indeed that can prevent them from accomplishing the first part of their design; and if they land, who shall prophesy the scenes that are to follow? But whether they come or not, things continuing to proceed in their present train must end, at no remote period, in convulsion,—probably revolution. It seems to me the duty of each young man especially, seriously to think and make up his mind as to what he ought to do in the approach and the reality of such an event.

* "In the field of government, as in that of the world, the tares of despotism were sown while men slept!"—HALL'S *Apology for the Freedom of the Press*, &c., WORKS, iii. 137.

XXIII. TO HIS PARENTS.

Chichester, July 13, 1798.

HONOURED PARENTS,—I wish I could compensate for so long a silence by communicating something that should give you great satisfaction; or at least something that should be new. A want of this, mixing itself with my antipathy to writing letters, and my disposition to procrastinate, is always a principal cause of my neglect in this particular—a neglect which I feel quite certain it would be unjust to ascribe to a want of affection or friendship,—though indeed I cannot deny that it may have that appearance. I have sometimes thought I would write to no one till I could tell something extraordinary. I think I will therefore tell nothing about my mind till I can announce a completed revolution there; till every unworthy habit be melted away, and every conscientious principle in powerful operation. It would be useless to detail the catalogue of defects, and quite unnecessary to enumerate intended reforms. The revolutions of the world often admonish me that the mind of a reflective man ought, in respect of changes, to be beforehand with the world,—to have *first* achieved each important reform within itself, and to be able to say to other men, "*Follow me.*"

The events of this neighbourhood are but quite of the common kind. Alternate alarms of the coming of the French, and ridicule of those alarms when past; the parade of soldiers, and arms, and drums, and loyalty, and fashion, contrasted with complaints of declining trade, an enormous pressure of taxes, the wan and hopeless looks of poverty, execrations of the government and governors, and sighs for a revolution.

I forget the precise time of hay-harvest in the North; here, it has been over some weeks, and had a fine dry season. The corn-fields are becoming yellowish. There is a large quantity of the smaller kinds of fruit, such as gooseberries, cherries, &c., no considerable allowance, however, has fallen to my share.

The congregation here remains almost at a stand. Another member of the society, an aged woman, died about the time that I wrote my last letter. A whole view of the cir-

cumstances of the place strikes with an influence of the most bleak and chilly kind, on a mind in itself too cold, and which needs the directly opposite extreme of stimulation and fire. Yet in whatever manner I feel, my public addresses are not, I think, particularly defective in point of animation. Vastly remote from methodistic violence, I yet think I cannot be charged with dulness. As to being in any great or considerable degree useful, it is a thing quite out of the question: I never conceive any such hope.

In this town the persons that concern themselves *any* way about religion, seem to me to fall into two classes;—one, who regard only a farce of forms and ceremonies, and what are called decorums;—these are devout worshippers of gowns and bands, and the whole ecclesiastic mummary, and think it a most profane thing to appear in a pulpit in any other colour than hallowed black. . . . And another class, who have zealously adopted a few peculiar phrases and notions; some of them proper, some cant, some unintelligible, and some absurd. They only want to have these repeated with heat and positiveness an indefinite number of times, with occasional damnatory clauses for the edification of such as happen to think otherwise, and they are satisfied. If a man has discarded, or perhaps never learnt, the accustomed theological diction, and speaks in the general language of good sense, as he would on any other subject, they do not like his sentiments, even though accordant with their own;—his language and his thoughts are all pagan; he offers sacrifice with strange fire.

I sometimes fall into profound musings, on the state of this great world,—on the nature and the destinies of man,—on the subject of the question, “What is truth?” The whole hemisphere of contemplation appears inexpressibly strange and mysterious. It is cloud pursuing cloud, forest after forest, and Alps upon Alps! It is in vain to declaim against scepticism. I feel, with an emphasis of conviction, and wonder, and regret, that almost all things are enveloped in shade, that many things are covered with thickest darkness, that the number of things to which certainty belongs is small. . . . I hope to enjoy “the sunshine of the other world.” One of the very few things that appear to me not doubtful, is the truth of Christianity

in general; some of the evidences of which I have lately seen most ably stated by Archdeacon Paley in his book on the subject.

I should be perfectly in health but for some kind of complaint in my eyes, which gives me some apprehension. I have felt something of it ever since last summer, or autumn, when it was caused by walking late in the evening in the damp air of a shady retreat. . . . I very often bathe and swim in an inlet of the sea, which comes up within two miles of the town. I have persevered in learning to swim, and should now be but little afraid of the pits and rivers in your neighbourhood. . . . I did not suppose that my father's remarks and sentiments required a distinct and formal reply. I am always convinced of the sincere benevolence that dictates them, always feel that they have a claim to attention and to gratitude, and am always happy to adopt them as my own when my judgment perceives their justice.

XXIV. TO HIS PARENTS.

Chichester, Nov. 19, 1798.

HONOURED PARENTS,—I am not insensible of the value of that kind attention of Providence which still prevents me from having to communicate to you, and from hearing from you, any disastrous intelligence. I can indeed almost wonder, when I consider what a thing is life, that I retain it thus through lengthened months and years, and when I consider how still more frail is health, that I have to tell you I still possess its utmost vigour, excepting only in the case of my eyes. . . .

What may be the general state of religious societies in England, I am utterly ignorant. Not a particle of that kind of intelligence seems to circulate down to this coast. I have no hope of any extensive prevalence of true religion without the interference of angelic, or some other extraordinary and yet unknown agency, to direct its energies, and conquer the vast combination of obstruction and hostility that opposes it. An amazing fact is, that this hostility has

hitherto been mainly successful. The triumphs of religion have been most limited and small, those of evil almost infinite. We see the melancholy result of an experiment of eighteen hundred years, the whole Christian era. The result compels me to conclude that religion is utterly incompetent to reform the world, till it is armed with some new and most mighty powers; till it appears *in a new and last dispensation*. Men are the same they always were; and, therefore, till some such wonderful event takes place, their affections *will* be commanded by sense in opposition to faith, by earth in preference to heaven. The same causes operating, it were absurd to expect different effects. My melancholy musings on the state of the world have been much consoled by the famous maxim, "*Whatever is, is right.*" Yes, I believe that the whole system taken together is the best possible—is absolutely good; and that all the evil that ever has taken place, or that now prevails, was strictly necessary to that ultimate good which the Father of all intends. Believing that He has in view an *end* infinitely and perfectly good, I must believe that all things which take place among his creatures are means, proceeding in an undeviating line towards that end, and that, in decreeing the end, he decreed also the means. * As nothing can take place beyond the sphere of his power, nothing can take place against his will; therefore, the evils, the wickedness of mankind, are not against his sovereign will. Nothing is contingent; all evils are foreseen by him, and he permits them; but he would not permit them if something else would better answer his final purposes, inasmuch as he chooses the best possible means to accomplish his end; to suppose otherwise would be to suppose that the great work might have been done better. He, from the beginning, chose that all things should come to pass as they have done, as they do, and as they will hereafter; otherwise something must have come to pass either without his knowledge, or against his will. All the events of the world, all the actions of mankind, have been a correct chain of causes and consequences, up to the *first causes*; these *first causes* were all formed and fixed by God, with a perfect foresight of all the consequences, and he formed and fixed these causes in order to produce these very consequences. If sin be traced up to

its cause, that cause will be found to have been—the *nature and the state of man*; but this cause was precisely so fixed by the Creator, and evidently with a determination that this fatal consequence should follow; for he fixed it so that he saw this consequence most certainly would follow. He who fixed the first great moving causes appointed all their effects to the end of the world. “Whatever is, is right.” Thus, regarding God as strictly the cause of all things, I am led to consider all things as working his high will; and to believe that there is neither more nor less evil in the world than he saw accurately necessary toward that ultimate happiness to which he is training, in various manners, all his creatures. In this view too, I can sometimes commit myself to his hands with great complacency, certain that he will do for me, in all respects, that which is best. . . . The season, so gloomy here, must be dismal up on your hills; it would be peculiarly so to my father, if the spirit and the hopes of religion were not independent of changing times, and capable of triumphing over them all.

XIV. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Chichester, Feb. 15, 1799.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Forgive me that the business of this letter is, like that of so many former ones, entirely personal, and the person—myself. I am anxious to show you that your remonstrances, accusations, regrets, are not all in vain, though even during my last visit you probably thought them so. Unfortunately the most cynical fold of my character is the *outermost*. But impressions may disappear on the surface because they are gone inward.

I have thought with great emotion on some of the views and facts presented to me while with you. I have before expressed my conviction of the value of preaching, as an instrument of the best kind of utility. How much must the *sentimental* force of this conviction have been augmented by the representation of the apostolic felicities of such a man as Pearce! I feel affectingly that this is to live divinely; that this is indeed to imitate the great Master,

and to pursue a course which his approbation will crown. How much I long to call such men brothers, and to attest the relationship by a similarity of spirit and of action!

I have asked myself with solemn earnestness and deep regret, "Why am not *I* added to the evangelic constellation?" Oh! why not myself an apostle—a confessor? Shall I be indeed estranged from the best cause? At the day of accounts, shall it indeed be found that I have been, in the Messiah's kingdom, less than all my contemporaries? Am not *I* to hear the—"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" I have asked myself, "Are the obstacles insuperable?—are the causes of failure *necessarily* perpetual?" I am not convinced that the answer ought to be affirmative. I love the evangelic style of truth when I read it, or hear it, more than any other; it appeals directly to my heart, and makes me aspire ardently to attain that divine discipleship, that devotion to Jesus, which would make me zealous, and useful, and happy. I am unwilling to believe myself finally precluded from the most favoured and popular field of religious exertion,—that in which such men as Pearce, Hinton, and yourself, are labouring. You intimated in your last letter that this career is still open to me,—let but my mind be adapted. You repeated the opinion during my visit. I wish to know how far you were sincere. I should be happy to make one more experiment among people, if they are to be found, who have all the warmth of the gospel. There is a feeling that tells me I should succeed. Do you deem my present views of Christianity, if aided by more fervour of inculcation, essentially inadequate? My opinions are in substance Calvinistic, and therefore, when fully brought out, differ obnoxiously from those of the General Baptists here or elsewhere. Add to this, that many of their societies, either through the medium of their opinions, or from some other cause, seem to have been smitten with a mortal coldness and incurable decay. Among them, therefore, I could never reach the animated freedom, if I could obtain even a bare toleration, of that strain of preaching which my views require, and of which some enviable examples evince the superior efficacy, and in this efficacy evince perhaps the peculiar approbation of God.

Now then, the question is, Will you recommend me to any society you may hear of in your connexion, or to any other man (Pearce, for instance,) whose local information may be more extensive? I have an irresistible conviction that "the truth as it is in Jesus" is incomparably the best thing that can be administered to my fellow mortals, and that he is the noblest of men who administers this with the most fidelity and zeal. I feel this moment as if an angel appeared to me and commanded me thus to employ myself to my last hour. Yes! I will. The idea of losing all that glory of Christian achievement and immortal reward, which still appears *as if it were possible to me*, would greatly aggravate the sadness with which I think how much I have already lost.

I repeat, that while I cannot but condemn the circle and the spell of any denomination, *as a party of systematics professing a monopoly of truth*, I hold (I believe) accurately the leading points of the Calvinistic faith; as, the corruption of human nature, the necessity of a divine power to change it, irresistible grace, the influences of the Spirit, the doctrine of the atonement, in its most extensive and emphatic sense, final perseverance, &c., &c. As to my opinion respecting the person of Christ, a candid and honest statement would be, that I deem it the wisest rule to use *precisely the language of Scripture*, without charging myself with a definite, a sort of mathematical, hypothesis, and the interminable perplexities of explication and inference. I am probably in the same parallel of latitude with respect to orthodoxy, as the revered Dr. Watts, in the late maturity of his thoughts. I assigned to you the reason why I consider the question not of primary importance;—nor in fact is any question so, which is of difficult comprehension and determination.

The *necessarian* scheme, which has greatly consoled some of my feelings regarding mankind, has not, however, diminished my regrets for my own past negligence, nor the ever-springing desire to tread the exalted path of Christian heroism,—of prophets and apostles; and by teaching the strict connexion between cause and effect, it has enforced my conviction of the necessity of means and strenuous exertion to the attainment of ends. . . .

XXVI. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

[Date uncertain.]

I have nothing additional or different to express on the theological subject of our correspondence. Every new reflection tells me that my evangelic determinations ought to be, and every hope flatters that they will be, irreversible. Assembling into one view all things in the world that are important, and should be dear, to mankind, I distinguish the Christian cause as the celestial *soul* of the assemblage, evincing the same pre-eminence, and challenging the same emphatic passion which, in any other case, *mind* does beyond the inferior elements; and I have no wish of equal energy with that which aspires to the most intimate possible connexion with Him who is the life of this cause, and the life of the world.

I believe I expressed myself in a very crude manner on the subject of elocution, in my last letter. I must have utterly misrepresented myself, if you suppose my sentiments go in the smallest degree to approve a dry, monotonous enunciation. My leading principle is the simple and trite one, that every kind of speaking, whether argumentation, invective, familiar ideas, or solemn ones, should, in public, always take that modulation of voice and cast of manner which, in the actual intercourse of life is ascertained to be the appropriate one; and that there ought to be no *canonical* manner, belonging by distinction to the pulpit. It is, of course, that the sentimental *intonation* of voice should not be assumed, but when, and in the degree in which, the *sentiment* is there. Perhaps it is fair that a speaker's manner should thus always indicate the present pitch of his mind. In my diction I am sensible that a striking defect must have appeared in most of the extemporaneous specimens you have heard. You would notice a great many inert, make-weight, pieces of expression, to supply the want of continuity; many spiritless terminations of a sentence, hanging to the period like a withered hand to the body; a deficiency of the life-blood, so to call it, of fervid intelligence, circulating vitality to the last extremities of expression, into the minutest ramifications of phrase; a certain something like restive unwillingness in the train of

words to move on, producing an effect rather like the creak of unoiled wheels; and a want of what I again name, the liquid flux of expression, varying, swelling, concealing, each rugged point, as it glides freely over, and passing gracefully away.

I repeat that these defects belong to my *uninspired* seasons; that they are not inserted into my most appropriate and characteristic diction, even my letters will testify. I own it, however, a criminal neglect, not to have acquired that command of my mind, which would make it independent on the visitations of sentiment, for an execution at least moderately proper and graceful. . . .

XXVII. TO HIS PARENTS.

Chichester, March 25, 1799.

HONOURED PARENTS,—Some of the particulars contained in your letter occasioned me considerable surprise. At an advanced age, changes of any kind are unpleasant, and a new habitation may at first require one degree of patience added to that which your situation needed before. However, the principal consideration in any residence is, that piety which is confined to none, and which makes into a temple of the Divinity whatever house it inhabits. To the immortal spirit every house, and the world itself, is but a prison; you carry into your new abode the pleasing certainty, that *no* sublunary abode will detain you so long as the one which you have quitted. How much you will know before so many more years shall have passed! Long before that time you will have seen the visions of eternity; you will have entered the *alone* happy mansions; you will have joined the great company which no man can number. Yes, and at an earlier period or a later, I hope I shall meet you there, after having overcome through the blood of the Lamb. Go before, if it must be so, and enter first into the paradise of God; I trust that the path of faith and zeal will conduct me to the same happy place, and that He who has the keys of the invisible world will give me admittance there.

. . . . Provided I could realize the requisite preliminaries,

a matrimonial connexion is certainly the object of my wishes at present, as much as, perhaps more than, at any former time. Certain romantic projects, stretching into wild and distant scenes, have, for some time past, considerably faded on my imagination. I wish it were possible to mingle enthusiasm of design with sobriety of calculation, and then to crown this conjunction with the addition of resolute, persevering industry.

Within the last fortnight my eyes have been in *one* respect (for two or three complaints seem to meet in them), considerably better. I do not feel reason to be sanguine as to the effect of the means last prescribed to me, but shall persist for the present to employ them, though attended with much pain. To-morrow I mean to write a statement of symptoms, in a letter to Hughes, to be shown to the gentleman I last consulted, and to whom I was introduced through the means of Hughes's acquaintance with him. If it appear necessary, I will not hesitate to make another journey to London on purpose. I can at present read a moderate time with tolerable ease, which I could by no means do some time since. Conscience has repeatedly made accusation on my neglect of employing this faculty, each faculty, the whole man, in a zealous prosecution of the noblest purposes. Hoping for a restoration of soundness in this valuable article, and determined to consecrate my whole self, whether in disorder or well, to the work of God, with even an apostle's zeal, I feel much resignation to his providence, respecting the event of this and each other affair. Your prayers I know will not be wanting. In mine I have felt and acknowledged the necessity of admonitory dispensations, and even have been in some degree thankful for them. I have supplicated Heaven, that whatever afflictions are absolutely needful to make me and keep me such as I ought to be, and such as I find it very difficult to be, may be applied. At whatever cost, I fervently wish to be humble, to be devotional, to be heavenly-minded,—in short, to be a Christian. Life is but short; and it is long, long since I fancied it *could* be a scene of pleasure and paradise. I consent to take it as a series of sorrows; to pass through it as a vale of tears, if in the end that better world may pour all its light and its joys on my soul.

My visit to Mr. Hughes has been of great service in respect of my religious feelings. He has the utmost degree of evangelic animation, and has incessantly, with affectionate earnestness in his letters, and still more in his personal intercourse, acted the monitor on this subject. It has not been in vain. I have felt the commanding force of the duty to examine and to judge myself with a solemn faithfulness. In some measure I have done so, and I see that on this great subject I have been wrong. The views which my judgment has admitted, in respect to the gospel in general, and Jesus the great pre-eminent object in it, have not inspired my affections in that animated, unbounded degree, which would give the energy of enjoyment to my personal religion, and apostolic zeal to my ministrations among mankind. This fact is serious, and moves my deep regrets. The time is come to take on me, with stricter bonds and more affectionate warmth, the divine discipleship. I fervently invoke the influences of Heaven, that the whole spirit of the gospel may take possession of all my soul, and give a new and powerful impulse to my practical exertions in the cause of the Messiah.

My opinions are more Calvinistic than when I first came here; so much so as to be in direct hostility with the leading principles of belief in this society. The greatest part of my views are, I believe, accurately Calvinistic. My opinion respecting future punishments is an exception.

Judging from what it is here, I deem that the season must, with you, be still very inclement. Very soon, however, another May will shed its mild influences to alleviate my father's pains and confinement. My mother will feel even so short a remove an added burden in the fatigue of a return from Hebden Bridge, Heptonstall, &c. Which house is it in the fold that you occupy? Nothing of consequence is in motion here, except indeed the arrangements respecting the income-tax, which seems to transform many into enemies of government who professed to be friends before. What is the state, on the whole, of the cotton trade? No trade, however, no resources of any kind, can long support the present enormous system—as about a third part of the whole productive industry of the nation goes directly to the purposes of government and war, with the prospect of a

still larger proportion being so diverted each succeeding year.

The fate of Europe, it seems, is about to be put to a last trial in Germany. If the French are still successful, universal revolution, England not excepted, seems a matter of course. One of my last sermons was on the text, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." His kingdom come, his will be done. . . .

XXVIII. TO MISS CAROLINE CARPENTER.

Chichester, [date uncertain.]

Miss C.—It is an ingenuous spirit which approaches you—happy to avow an animated esteem for your qualities, and very sorry for the destiny which renders you a stranger.

The accidental mention of some of your relatives, during an evening I lately passed with a highly intelligent and respected gentleman, led the conversation at last to you. I had not heard of you before. Your friend (qualified by uncommon discernment and coolness to represent justly) displayed a character which captivated my attention entirely, for I instantly perceived that no common spirit gleamed in its expressive lines. He described your quickness and vigour of thought, the cordial ardour of your sentiments, and your resolute perseverance to obtain whatever accomplishments you determined ought to be yours. He spoke of a vivacity significant and characteristic, even in that very sprightly extreme into which he intimated it sometimes plays. He added the best praise, apparently with a confidence it would be merited for ever; he said you were *good*. He evidently described with great pleasure, and has selected a most fortunate subject to impart it. I acknowledged the claims of the interesting stranger with an emotion that exulted in an occasion of expressing itself so warmly. . . We could have wished not to feel that the instance we contemplated was a rare one. We were sorry to glance a look of mingled pity and blame on the common currency of female character; and contrast was not necessary to

Miss C., the multitude soon faded from sight, and left her alone. We wanted but your actual presence to have been completely happy that hour. We joined in regret that the world should have influences inauspicious to a person of such happy promise; that to live in its gayer scenes especially, and lose none of the refinements of sensibility and conscience, is a trial of excellence which gives benevolence a solicitude even for Miss C.

A little while after this conversation the thought occurred of writing to you. But would not this be a strange action? would not some fantastic animal of the family of Don Quixote appear to Miss C.'s imagination? Yet why? she will not deny my right to be interested in a character like hers, wherever it is found, and to associate her image with those ideal forms of select individuals among whom I love to muse. Will not the admiration which I cannot refuse to rising excellence, though distant and personally unknown, entitle me to convey the expression of a wish, that escaping all eclipse, that excellence may be finished into full and permanent lustre? Yes! I *have* a right to the pleasure of thinking of Miss C., of wishing she may be greatly happy, and of telling her so, though in this form of friendship without a name.

The view of such an animated and strong character naturally leads to reflections on what are intimately allied to it—high principles and conduct.

If I should venture freely on to express some of these reflections to the person at whose idea they rise, will she absolve me? will candour still wear her accustomed smile? I hesitate; but I could not hesitate if I thought you would in any degree charge me with impertinence. A high opinion of your character alone could have suggested the thought of addressing any such communications to you. An essential principle in a superior character is a refined self-respect, and I could not bear for a moment to hurt this delicate and honourable feeling. Formal lecture-looking presumption would not more incur than deserve your scorn. Believe me, madam, no mortal can detest more than I do the part of an officious intruder with a world of pretended wisdom to spare. I abhor it. With so much intelligence and principle, you will of yourself be just to each subject of

deep interest ; but this is the very reason that tempts me to offer reflections on some of those subjects to you. I know the luxury of disclosing ideas to a mind who has ideas, of expatiating on some grand interest with a person who feels already all its inspiration. It is like planting a favourite flower amid a bed of still more beautiful flowers, instead of dooming it to droop or die among nettles, a fate very similar to that of aspiring sentiments when attempted to be imparted to trivial or degraded minds. I acknowledge ambition, madam—the wish to obtain for some of my sentiments the honour of mingling with yours. I wish to enjoy the complacency of believing that for a little while a very interesting lady has thought with me, and perhaps has not been displeased. I felicitate you on possessing a mind of a superior order ; what paltry, vulgar dust to this are those distinctions which the world holds out for its fools to adore—and they do adore ! Pagans !

Allow me to second your own views in the wish, that you may secure its utmost value, disclose all its energies, embrace all its felicities, strengthen it to the last possible degree of power. Let the mind assert an existence entire, active, and strong, a contrast to so many minds which we see glimmering and flitting on the brink of nothing. Let it command through the whole system of feeling and action with an ever-waking and mighty prevalence ; so that life may be to the utmost that is possible, what it is a poor thing when it is not, the life of mind. Be the superior person, the dignified Caroline. You feel you can, therefore should, nay, *will* be. In the scene of mental pleasures and attainments, you will have the same advantages as a person of gigantic stature in a grove of fruit trees—an ability to reach the highest and the best ; and here ability, right, and duty, are the same. Nature, science, morals, religion, these belong to you. You have power to enter and possess these treasures ; and if it were possible you would voluntarily shut yourself out, who would applaud the self-denial ? who but those whose applause and censure you would despise ? how slight to a vigorous mind, how insipid to hearts of sensibility, is the usual tenor of pursuits and intercourse among many of our acquaintance, among the younger part especially—among the ladies (I think I do not

see Miss C. frown)—among the *ladies* emphatically. I appeal to you whether insignificance, frivolity, inanity, be not the words? Is this the triumph of existence, the glory of being rational, the superiority of man over a butterfly? I am not pleading for brown solemnity, the November habits of fourscore and a convent. No! No! No! I am pleading for the genuine voluptuousness of life. I am pleading that life may have some zest and poignancy infused by a mind acting with vivacity on subjects worthy of its energy. I am pleading that life may not be dissipated among trifles, till at last itself sicken into a tasteless trifle, with neither resources to be happy, nor courage to expire! You, madam, were not designed for the common level, nor, I think, could often condescend to it, and be blameless; but that level cannot be yours. "A soul pregnant with celestial fire" will disdain that little artificial sphere within which imbecility and folly have condemned themselves, and may invite *you*, to move. It will scorn to inhabit a painted egg-shell, and live on what commonly passes for pleasure. It feels attractions irresistible, the magnetism of the sky. It will demand its own element. Let it rise!

The divinest object is to be *good*. Pardon me, madam, I do not forget the pleasing fact that you are good; only I am wishing that you may be signally so. In goodness any elevation below the sublimest gratifies a noble spirit, not as a complacent resting-place, but as an approach towards the summit, and an omen of reaching it ere while. A more than sufficient number will be content to inhabit the low ground of virtue, and Miss C. can well be spared to try the ascent to those elevated possibilities which she cannot have beheld with indifference. I trust your contempt is not less than mine, of the common notions, cant, and conduct, of contented mediocrity. How much nobler is the generous distress which, after weeping over conscious deficiency, kindles into enthusiasm at the fair vision of perfect goodness, gilding a far-off view of future destiny! With what emotion we contemplate a great example, and eagerly adopt a brother or sister of the heart from the regions of death or poetry! But who shall convert the humble pleasure of admiring into the triumph of being such.

a character? To a question like this, Miss C.'s feelings have often responded.

There is one solemn rule of endless obligation, without pledging ourselves to which we are not numbered by the Eternal among his own great party of friends, selected through the creation; viz., to accomplish both as to what we are, and what we do, *all*, absolutely *all the good we can*: *can*, that is to say, by the combination of all our time, all our faculties, and all the assistance which a gracious Power above will impart. If, therefore, at any pitch of attainment or exertion we pause to ask, "Is not this enough?" and again, "Will not this suffice?" the answer is instant and invariable, "Can you do no more? Are you improving your time with a diligence which cannot, *cannot* be more intense? Are you cultivating your heart and mind with a solicitude of wisdom not to be augmented? Are you serving mankind with a Saviour's benevolence, and God with a martyr's zeal?" Answer, O conscience! thou canst tell! Rigid but sublime condition! yet not rigid either, for goodness is not a task of superstition, and foreign to the great affair of happiness. To be good is to be happy. Angels are happier than mankind because they are better.

"What a glorious world!" I exclaim, as I look up to the alternate clear effulgence and cloudy beauties of the sky, and then over all the vernal charms of the earth. How genuine, how innocent, are all these delightful visions! "Peace be to thee, candid nature, and thy scenes! Thou art what thou appearest." But this indeceptive disclosure of the reality of things does not prevail among the objects of human pursuit; for see the numbers who in quest of happiness are fatally deluded—deluded surely, for they could never choose to be so miserable.

It is unfortunate, in such a scene, to dare the experiment without the keen and watchful fire of an angel's eye. Decree in the outset, dear madam, that you *will not* be imposed upon. As the fair forms that promise happiness and joy, approach you and invite your attention with smiles, arrest them and compel them within the circle where truth combats enchantment. How many will you send deformed away! Be resolute! Pluck away every

mask and veil! Look at them with the mind's full force; examine them sternly, as Rhadamanthus judging the departed spirits. Exert this keen inquisition on every thing—your habits, your friends, your engagements, and whatever is important to you. Repeat that you will not be imposed on; ascertain the fact, grasp the reality. Ask, "What good? what tendency? what price? what duration?" Ask, and pause. Determine to extort the reply of truth. Oh, do not relent! a judge or a captive! The hour of trial must precede the hour of felicity. Remember that each delusive appearance may conceal a fountain of some deadly element, which the unfortunate person that examines not but confides, may soon perceive to open, and pour a Stygian stream over the whole of life. Remember that each delusion must ultimately fly; how happy, then, to anticipate the hour of revelation, and leave as little as possible to be taught by grim experience, with her execrable lesson in *black print*! Thus, while so many are doomed to wake from the dreams of vanishing delight, may you possess "the sober certainty of waking bliss;" and may your felicities, as they bloom and aspire, embrace the column of eternity, and live for ever! Instruction, with its detail of cautions, is not for you. A friendly voice will not say to you, "Avoid this and the other; do not condescend to the petty clicking of cards; do not waste your time, and the dear delightful luxuries of a sentimental breast, in those modish groups of company where Miss C. or where Minerva would appear, and act with no superiority over a pretty fool." No; you will sit in judgment yourself, and act from a decision all your own. You are able, you are worthy; do not forget a judge's deliberation.

The friends of virtue are pledged by that friendship to an incessant hostility against folly in all its forms. You have determined, therefore, what kind of regard may be due to some of the caprices of fashion, and to all its slaves; to mere *beaux* and *belles*; to the vain pomp of wealth and rank, parading to the vulgar gaze, in the laughable notion that to *look big* is to *be great*; to what may be called the *cant* of gentility, mincing, in affected phrases, through all its varieties of insignificance; and to the tribe of occupations and insect amusements (alas! flies about a dead body!).

which engage so many of the circles of what is called "polished society." Smite some of these forms of folly with an ardent beam of your mind, and they will fade before you like Hamlet's ghost at the crowing of the cock.

Against all these virtue expresses unalterable antipathy; and shall her accomplished votary—her Caroline—do less? Folly meanwhile may wonder why you should not graciously smile. It belongs to a virtuous spirit to assert an independence of character, a power of self-direction, and to scorn and violate custom, and every thing else that opposes its sublime principles. Despicable is an atom character, carried along with the mass,—a human bubble, impotent to move an inch against the stream. You are a person not to be led, but to lead; your mental vigour will frequently give you an ascendancy among those you may associate with, and benevolence will point it to its noblest use; can you imagine to yourself a pleasure more emphatic than to enlighten and meliorate? Reflect on the serious discipline and momentous value of life; reflect that life itself will come to an end. These thoughts will take away much from gaiety; these deductions ought to be made. The claims are such as we are not likely to refuse; what remains will be legitimate.

I know how ungracious an offering such a letter as this would be to many young ladies; some would call it impertinent; some fantastic, and very many insufferably serious, "The ghost of Cato!" they would exclaim, and recoil. In saying this I am not assuming that you must of course necessarily approve; yet I have addressed these ideas to you in the persuasion that they would not be unwelcome, though they could not be necessary. If they were necessary, I know they would not be acceptable. "And if not necessary," perhaps you will say, "Why, after all, do you write?" Can you not then, madam, be kind to the ambition I mentioned before?

While I indulge with pleasure and pride the thought of revolving sentiments *with* Miss C. rather than *for* her, another thought tells me that it is not exactly thus that her sentiments would have flowed, and not exactly thus she would have communicated them to a person for whom she meant to express her high complacency and respect. She

would have infused a certain engaging spirit through all that would have charmed away the possibility of offence, and made an intrusion ever dear to memory.

Well, madam, but do accept the intentions of this strange letter, from a person who wonders that a sympathetic interest in excellence, though unseen, *should* be strange.*

XXIX. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Chichester, April 29, 1799.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Some days spent from home have combined with other circumstances to delay what ought to have been an immediate answer to your last. My acknowledgments are due for the service rendered me in waiting on Mr. Wathen, and transmitting his advice. It will be followed,—not indeed without a strong suspicion that there is some disorder in the globe of the eye, to which this treatment alone will not reach. I now see, or fancy a slight amendment in the lids. For the greater part of the time since I wrote, the eyes altogether have been in a state somewhat more favourable in respect of feeling, than I then described. That any progress has been made towards removing the principal cause of disorder, whatever it may be, I can scarcely allow myself to hope. My wishes join with yours, that this and every other painful visitation may have a purifying effect.

Lately I have felt a degree of gratitude which I had before scarcely believed possible, for the discipline of suffering, while a merciful hand applies it to correct the mind.

I proceed to the substance of your letter. I shall not conceal that the *first* impression was much of the painful kind. I said to myself, walking pensively in a field, "*Here*, while I speak of the miseries of human guilt and impotence, assert the inanity of human merits, and the presumptuous impiety of reposing in any degree on *self*—while I refer

* "The consumptive complaint of which this young lady died, at the age of twenty-one, has in two or three years carried off her mother and six sisters."—*Note by Mr. Foster.*

every thing to divine grace, assert the infinite value of the Saviour, say that he is 'all in all,' exhibit him as the blessed and only hope of the world—I encounter a cold and discordant sympathy, among the principal persons of the connexion. I am called Calvinistic, Methodistic, and cast out of the synagogue. I address myself to minds of happier light, whose intelligence I admire, whose piety I love, and *they* see nothing in the emotions which have prompted my sighs, my prayers, my ardent hopes, more than the illusions of imagination, but thinly and partially concealing an '*enmity against God*,' which still lies black and immovable at the foundation of all! 'Tis thus I am for ever repelled from every point of religious confraternity, and doomed, still doomed, a melancholy monad, a weeping solitaire. Oh world! how from thy *every* quarter blows a gale, wintry, cold, and bleak, to the heart that would expand!"

These were the feelings of the instant; but I soon recovered calmness enough to recognize the faithful friend in the sharp inquisitor, and to thank him both for his benevolence and for the *mode* of evincing it. Had he discovered less penetration or less faithfulness, I should have respected him less. I am constrained to feel you are worthy to be my Preceptor still; and, while I hope to *extract some* good from every one, I trust to receive it in copious communications from you.

Perhaps it may be salutary for myself to entertain some of the same apprehensions which you have expressed, and certainly a severe investigation of the state of my mind discloses so much that is unworthy, or equivocal, as to warrant suspicion to extend still further than I see.

I know it too well, that for a long course of time, during which I have felt an awful regard for religion, my mind has not been under the full, immediate impression of its most interesting character, the most gracious of its influences, its evangelic beams. I have not with "open face beheld the transforming glory of the Lord." I have, as it were, worshipped in the outer courts of the temple, and not habitually dwelt in that sacred recess where the God of love reveals all himself, in Jesus Christ. And is it difficult to conceive, that in aspiring and advancing towards a better state, I may be accompanied for a while by some measure of the

defects and the shades contracted in that gloomy sojourn, which I must for ever deplore?

It is much to affirm, and I think I may with great confidence affirm, that all my cherished, warmest desires and intentions are consonant to the pure evangelic standard. May I not allege it as some proof of this, that I at present wish to commit myself to the full extent of the apostolic profession; nay, more, that I do habitually commit myself here, at the expense of the feelings which regard the coincidence or opposition of those I am connected with?

You doubt whether my heart has really given the fulness of its affection to the Saviour. As far as my heart itself feels this doubt, it is filled with trembling: it assuredly can never rest till no doubt on the subject remains.

But which of the *principles* of that devotion are wanting? Certainly none of the solemn *reasons* of it are wanting, and none, I think, *unfelt*. Whatever is appalling in the aspect of the king of terrors, whatever is affecting in the welfare and prospects of a soul guilty, immortal, and *my own*; all that is interesting in the pursuit of happiness, that is commanding in the opening visions of Eternity, or awful in the contemplation of God the Judge,—all these concur with the infinite worthiness of that Saviour to constrain me into the sacred union, and to seal it. Can a more urgent and immense interest, can stronger bonds, make him the Lord of my heart or of yours? Are these not precisely the reasons why he *should* be dear? Yes, he stands forward to my view in a most momentous connexion with all these; and in whatever degree these mighty objects are affecting to me, in that degree he is become estimable and beloved.

But you fear I do not fully meet the most important office and character of the Saviour, that of a deliverer from the miseries of sin; that I do not receive Jesus in the deep abasement of conscious guilt. Perhaps you image me approaching him in the spirit of one who should say, "I have sat in judgment on thy claims, and I find that *thou art worthy that I should be thy friend*; I choose, therefore, to wear the *honours* of thy cause, and rank among thy *dignified* followers." Indeed you are mistaken. It is at the audit of conscience, while guilt weighs heavy on my heart, that I learn the true and unspeakable value of a Redeemer. But

I have ever felt this internal world of iniquity, and the endless griefs that accompany it, a mournful theme. Surely I might have been excused, though I did not disclose in detail all the sentiments that excruciate or melt a soul contemplating and lamenting its deep depravity and aggravated guilt. I might have been forgiven a reluctance to expatiate on the subject *as personal to myself*, before any being but Him only who can pardon. Is it not enough that I am awfully sensible how presumptuous and hopeless this advance to *Him* would be, without a frequent reference to the work of Jesus Christ?

Why would my friend attribute the *confidence* with which I have expressed my intentions and expectations to a vain self-sufficiency, when it could be assigned to a much more generous cause, *the force of irresistible conviction*? It is impossible to feel what I sometimes feel, and not indulge at the time (inconsiderately, it may be) a persuasion, that the effect of such emotions *must* be eternal. "My heart presumes it cannot lose, The relish all my days." I scarcely ever read the New Testament without feeling all that I now describe; and I love to cherish this ardour. Indeed this enthusiasm often subsides into the recollection of *past* ardours, convictions, confidence, hopes, and *their fate*! I then wonder I can ever indulge confidence again. But again it swells and rises—and should it not rise?—at the view of that gracious economy of divine influences and strength from heaven which Jesus has proclaimed and still administers. I am verily persuaded that no man embraces this part of the Gospel with a firmer belief or a warmer joy than I do. I solemnly aver that all my habitual confidence, as to what I shall become or accomplish, rests exclusively here. The alternative is *such* a hope or flat despair.

"Mortifications, censures, injustice, failures, await the Christian zealot." Yes, it is impossible I can have observed the world so long, and not be apprised of it all. I perceive the thorns and briars tangled across his path, and—to fill up the picture—the spiders that harbour among them—the causes of disgust added to the causes of pain. The most sanguine fires of zeal and benevolence should not, and cannot long delude his judgment out of the certain, sad, and permanent estimate of mankind. Human society,

compounded as it is with ignorance, prejudice, and conceit, furnishes ungracious materials to work upon. It is but to a comparative few that the Christian missionary can hope to be useful. Melancthon soon had cause to "smile in bitterness" at his fond youthful expectations of convincing and reforming all mankind. There are many whom, as Dr. Young says, "you cannot love but for the Almighty's sake." Oh, what a humiliation of all that was aspiring—what a blast of all that was tender, have I sometimes experienced on making the transition from the exaltation of prayer, and the fervours of charity in the closet, to the *praxis*—in the actual sight and intercourse of mankind. A reflecting man's expectations will indeed be moderate, and it will be difficult for him to combine with his zeal and efforts that enthusiasm which is forbidden to mingle its fire with his *hopes*. But what then? What happy energy has sustained and impelled Watts and Doddridge? What energy *does* fire Pearce, Hinton, or yourself? And cannot *I* be kept constant to the righteous cause by the voice of the Eternal? Cannot *I* feel the solemn claims of a duty that leaves me no choice? Cannot *I* consider Him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself? Cannot *I* have respect to the recompense of reward? As to "disappointment in the expectation of applause," as to "the sacrifice of philosophic fame," if you will believe me, I hold these considerations very light. I have lately thought on this subject intensely, and not in vain. Philosophy itself unites with religion to pour an utter contempt on the passion for fame. I have been labouring a good while to fix my mind firmly on this principle—namely, to persist in what I judge the most excellent, resolutely, zealously, and unalterably, and *only for unalterable reasons*, and then regard neither praise nor censure, admiration nor contempt, caresses nor abuse, any otherwise than *as they may affect my power of doing good*.

There is great force in your remarks on the deceptions of *imagination*. A strong imagination, expanding and sweeping over ages and worlds in quest of grandeur, will exult in the sight of whatever is *great* in any department of contemplation, as well the evangelic as any other. *It will hail it as an object of taste*. It will revel in a sublime romance of

religion. It will admire the character of Jesus, and some of the Christian truths and prospects as magnificent objects, analogous to the heavenly bodies and stupendous phenomena in the physical universe. These feelings may exist where they do not evince, nor form any part of the influences of, a divine spirit pervading the soul and making it evangelic and heavenly. This is what you mean; I believe it is too true. But what, then, is the *criterion* to ascertain the nature of these fervours in any given case? The proof will be found in the *consistency* or *inconsistency* of these feelings with the *other* movements of the mind and in their consequences. Let Rousseau be the instance. In his eloquent praise of Christianity, *taken by itself*, you will hardly detect a proof that it is not dictated by a piety sublime as his genius. Ask, then, Does Rousseau zealously endeavour to establish all the proofs of Christianity? Does Rousseau reverently submit his genius and his philosophic speculations to its authority? Does Rousseau receive with equal pleasure the *abasing*, as the elevating, truths of Christianity? Does he, as a *guilty* being, rejoice in Christ *chiefly as a Saviour*? Can he despise philosophic fame for the sake of Christ? Does he zealously proclaim him to his brethren? Is he sensible of the excellence of the Christian consolations? Does he pray fervently? Does he deny himself and take up his cross? Are his morals reformed? These would prove him a Christian, and his eloquence would be that of an apostle. 'Tis matter of never-ending regret that Rousseau's character will not bear such a process of trial. I am not claiming any kindred to his sublime genius while I bring myself to the touchstone, and say, "A glow of imagination;"—but certainly that is not all. The gospel is to me, not a matter of complacent speculation only, but of momentous use, of urgent necessity. I come to Jesus Christ because I need pardon, and purification, and strength. I feel more abased, as *he* appears more divine. In the dust I listen to his instructions and commands. I pray fervently in his name, and above all things for a happy union with him. I do, and will proclaim him. For his sake I am willing to go through evil report and good report. I wish to live and die in his service.

Is not this some resemblance of "the simplicity of the

fishermen," on which you insist with emphasis? This spirit, my dear friend, is in a certain degree,—to be, I trust divinely augmented,—assuredly mine. The Galilean faith has gained the ascendant, and I anticipate, though with humility and intervals of fear, everything happy from its influence. The tide of my mind is really turned, and though it has not yet mounted the desired height, I trust I cannot be mistaken as to its direction.

The hint in your letter respecting scripture *diction*, was, I remember, in your conversation, a direct accusation of my being philosophically reluctant or ashamed to employ it. No charge was ever more unjust. I acknowledge the defect, but the *reason* of it is a memory which I can never trust to attempt verbal citations from any book, unless either I have time for recollection, or have the passage written before me; nay, the reason is anything rather than the one you have surmised.

Thus far I have written, and with more prolixity than I intended; somewhat in character of *client* to my pen. But after all, my capital concern is, not to defend what I am, but to be what I ought to be. If some of the evils you have suggested *do* still adhere to me, my most ardent prayer is for their removal. Will not yours be added? Meanwhile both my feelings and a strong conviction of *duty* impel me towards action. The reflection on the inutility to which I have been doomed so long, often starts into anguish. I cannot divest myself of the persuasion that I belong to some popular and useful sphere. Will my much respected friend assist me? Will not you take me by the hand? Will you not meet with a brother's cordiality a returning wanderer? Can the gracious spirit of the Christian cause move its advocate rather to repel associates than invite? Methinks a disciple of Jesus would say, "He that is not *against* us, is *for* us." Methinks while he would animadvert with faithfulness on every defect, he yet would zealously urge forward the *general effect*. Methinks he would wish a convalescent religionist placed amid the most salubrious air. But I am checked,—I am chilled. Was not your letter meant to tell me that you would not incur any responsibility on the subject? This was one of my ideas in the first impression, and I am not now certain of the

contrary. It is of pressing consequence that I should know. Of my engagement here, only one month remains. I cannot regret its termination;—it is a Cimmerian sojourn. Do not accuse me, my dear friend; do not require that I should work miracles. A most uncommon combination of circumstances renders it almost hopeless that any man can be of much service here. I have not written to any person but yourself on the subject of another situation. I ought to consider you as a favourable specimen of what I might expect in the evangelic connexion; if you, therefore, refuse your countenance, it will be in vain to apply to any other. Then the sweet hopes of an useful happiness, which have revived with so much ardour, would have bloomed but again to die! Well; it would be but one more in the sable train of disappointments. My destiny is in the hands of a good, but mysterious Being. Let it be accomplished!

XXX. TO MISS CAROLINE CARPENTER.*

[About Midsummer, 1799.]

I should not venture a momentary interruption of feelings, which I know must choose the pensive retirement of the heart, if I did not hope to insinuate a sentiment or two, not discordant with the tone of grief.

I am willing to believe the interest I have taken in your happiness will authorize me to convey to you, at such a serious hour, the expression of a friendly and solicitous sympathy. I am willing to believe that the sincere respect with which I have addressed you in serener days,† will be a pledge to you, that, in assuming such a liberty, I cannot forget the delicacy of respect which peculiarly belongs to you, now you are in a scene of suffering; and that this little attention which I seem to myself to owe you, will not be deemed to violate the sacredness of sorrow.

* "The person to whom this was addressed was, the writer believes, in health at the time it was written, but died a few months afterwards. She received it a few weeks after the death of one very near relative, and when another was each day expected to die."—*Note by Mr. Foster.*

† Letter XXVIII.

I should be most happy, if it were possible for me to impart any influences that could alleviate the oppressions of the heart, or aid your fortitude in its severe probation. But I dare not indulge so pleasing a hope. I know too well that suffering clings to the sufferer's *self*; and that any other mind, though actuated by the kindest wishes, is still a foreign mind, and inhabits a separate sphere from which it can but faintly breathe consoling sentiments.

Yet, doubtless, there are in existence truths of sweet and mighty inspiration, which, perfectly applied, would calm your feelings, and irradiate the gloom around you. How happy were the art to steal such fire from heaven! How much I wish it yours! Yes, and there are softenings of distress, glimpses of serenity, ideas of tender enthusiasm, firm principles, sublime aspirings, to mingle with the feelings of the good in every situation. I love to assure myself these are not wanting to you. I hope they will prolong the benignant charm of their visitation, and be at intervals closer to your heart than even the causes of sadness that environ you.

You will not, Miss C., disdain the solicitude of a sincere friend, who is interested for you while you are suffering, and loves the sensibility of which he regrets he cannot beguile the pain. I think I would be willing to feel for a season all that you feel, in order to acquire an entire and poignant sympathy. This alone can convey the exquisite significance, the magic of soul, into the suggestions that seek to revive the depressed energy of a tender heart. I would exert the whole efficacy of a mind thus painfully instructed, to soothe or to animate; I would look around for every truth and every hope to which Heaven has imparted sweetness, for the sake of minds in grief; I would invoke whatever friendly spirit has power to shed balm on anxious or desponding cares, and, unobserved, steal a part of the bitterness away; I would also attempt a train of *vigorous thinking*; I would not despair of some advantage from the applications of *reasoning*. Indeed it is known too well, there are moments when the heart refuses all control, and gives itself without reserve to grief. It feels, and even cherishes emotions which it cannot yield up to any power less than that of heaven or of time. Arguments may vainly, sometimes, forbid the tears that flow for the affect-

ing events of remembrance or anticipation. Arguments will not obliterate scenes whose every circumstance pierced the heart. Arguments cannot recall the victims of death. Dear affections!—the sources of felicity, the charm of life,—what pangs, too, they can cause! You have loved sensibility, you have cultivated it, and you are destined yet, I hope, to obtain many of its sweetest pleasures; but you see how much it must sometimes cost you. Contemn, as it deserves, the pride of stoicism; but still there are the most cogent reasons why sorrow should somewhere be restrained. It should acknowledge the limits imposed by judgment and the will of Heaven. Do not yield your mind to the gloomy extinction of utter despondency. It still retains the most dear and valuable interests, which require to be saved from the sacrifice. Before the present circumstances took place, the wish of friendship would have been, that you might be long happily exempted from them; *now* it is that you may gain from them as high an improvement and a triumph as ever an excellent mind won from trial. From you an example may be expected of the manner in which a virtuous and thoughtful person has learnt to bear the melancholy events of life. Even at such a season it is not a duty to abandon the study of happiness. Do not altogether turn away from sweet Hope, with her promises and smiles. Do not refuse to believe that this dark cloud will pass away, and the heavens shine again; that happier days will compensate these hours that move in sadness. Grief will have its share—a painful share; but grief will not have your all, Caroline. There is good in existence still,—rich, various, endless,—the pursuit of which will elevate, and the attainment of which will crown you. Even your present emotions are the distresses of tender melancholy: how widely different from the anguish of guilt! Yours are such tears as innocence may shed, and intermingle smiles—pensive smiles, indeed, and transient, but expressive of a sentiment that rises toward heaven.

The most pathetic energies of consolation can be imparted by RELIGION alone, the never-dying principle of all that is happy in the creation. The firm persuasion that all things that concern us are completely every moment in the hands of our Father above, infinitely wise and merciful;

that he disposes all these events in the very best possible manner ; and that we shall one day bless him amid the ardours of infinite gratitude for even his most distressing visitations ;—such a sublime persuasion will make the heart and the character sublime. It will enable you to assemble all your interests together, your wishes, your prospects, your sorrows, and the circumstances of the persons that are dear to you, and present them in one devout offering to the best Father, the greatest Friend ; and it will assure you of being in every scene of life the object of his kind perpetual care.

Permit me, madam, to add, that one of the most powerful means towards preserving a vigorous tone of mind in unhappy circumstances, is to explore with a resolute eye the serious lessons which they teach. Events like those which you have beheld, open the inmost temple of solemn truth, and throw around the very blaze of revelation. In such a school, such a mind may make incalculable improvements. I consider a scene of death as being to the interested parties who witness it, a kind of *sacrament*, inconceivably solemn, at which they are summoned, by the voice of Heaven, to pledge themselves in vows of irreversible decision. Here, then, Caroline, as at the high altar of eternity, you have been called to pronounce, if I may express it so, the *inviolable oath*—to keep for ever in view the momentous value of life, and to aim at its worthiest use, its sublimest end ; to spurn, with a last disdain, those foolish trifles, those frivolous vanities, which so generally within our sight consume life, as the locusts did Egypt ; and to devote yourself with the ardour of passion to attain the most divine improvements of the human soul ; and in short, to hold yourself in preparation to make that interesting transition to another life, whenever you shall be claimed by the Lord of the world.

XXXI. TO MRS. R. MANT

Battersea, July 23, 1799.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Allow me to tell you that the varieties, the pleasures, or the mortifications, of a sojourn in the busy world, will never obliterate the remembrance of the most *meritorious individual* I met with in Chichester. In the short space that has elapsed, I have often thought of you. I have fancied to myself your mode of life, your walks in the fields, and your visits to your cousins. But however, when one experiences any change in respect to one's self, one is ready to imagine some change in every thing and person one knows, so much so, that if I were to revisit Chichester, one of the first inquiries of my eyes and my voice would be after *changes*. Though I have been absent but three or four weeks, I should ask, "What! are you quite the same kind of person?" "Is the circle of acquaintance the same?" "Is Watery Lane the same?" "The meeting just such as it was?" "The General Baptists quite the same?" "The room I slept in, and all its pictures, the same?" I know at least that *I* am too much the same. Oh! I pant for a grand revolution in all my soul and character. I wish for a sacred zeal, for devotional habits, and an useful life. How defective in all these while at Chichester! Conscience often told me that, though the situation was indeed unfavourable, yet no small part of the fault was in myself. I still, and shall ever feel, the regret of not having made those vigorous exertions which I might have made, which I ought to have made, and which, if made, might *perhaps* have had some considerable effect. I have almost wished sometimes, that I could have been there a season longer to make some kind of atonement to myself and to the people. But the past is irrevocable,—I hope the disapprobation with which I review it, will be an incentive, a strong incentive, to a nobler course hereafter. I have nothing particular to tell you. You will wonder that I have not yet been in London, though I am within four miles of it, and see St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey in the distance every day. It will be a great gratification if you will write to me soon, and copiously and carelessly as you would talk. I entreat you do not write

it twice over, as you sometimes do ; 'tis unnecessary, and it makes writing a serious labour. . . . Cultivate religion—confide in the unalterable goodness of a heavenly Father,—rejoice in Jesus Christ—and remember me in your prayers—you are not forgotten in mine.*

Yours, with most friendly regard,
J. FOSTER.

XXXII. TO MRS. B. MANT.

Battersea, Dec. 31, 1799.

. I have been occupied a great part of my time, and lazy the rest ; but never forgetful of the kindness I experienced, and the numberless pleasant hours which I spent in your house, and which claim a perpetual remembrance. I have very often wished to know, and intended writing immediately to ask, how you are, as to health, prospects, engagements, and society. How many thousand things we should have said, wished, debated ; how many books we should have glanced into ; how many living characters we should have examined, and admired or condemned ; how many adventures we should have had, or recalled, or dreamed ;—if we had passed the last six months, like the former ones, in the same abode. However, though at a distance, and knowing nothing of each other's course, I trust the time has not been passed by either without some improvement. My sojourn here has been rich in lessons of various kinds ; and this last day of the year calls me with a solemn, with, as it were, an expiring voice, to take an account of what has been accomplished in my heart and in my life during the year that is gone, and through all the time that has passed by me never to be recalled, I feel it must be a mortifying and penitential account ; how neglected have been the talents, how waste the precious hours, how little the good imparted to others ! how cold the devotion

* " May 1, 1797, Mr. Foster came to my house to live.—June 28, 1799, Mr. Foster went away to Battersea ; he lived with me two years.—December 20, 1800, Mr. Foster paid us a friendly visit for a week."—*Mrs. Mant, MSS.*

ascending—scarce ascending, to heaven! My soul looks with most painful regret on various scenes of the past, and particularly on the negligent, spiritless, and unevangelical strain of my public ministrations at Chichester. I do not know whether it was possible to have done great good; but it certainly was possible to have zealously attempted it; and in this I greatly failed. I hope such recollections will have the effect to stimulate all my future efforts, and thus derive to me a valuable advantage, even from the guilty remissness of the past. Let us both preach to ourselves with all our might; let us say, with a distinguished and devout hero, on the eve of a battle, “Perhaps I cannot inspire a generous ardour into those around me, but at least I will make sure of *one*.” Let us pray fervently; let us read the book of God; let us embrace the salvation of Christ; let us exhort our friends to go to heaven; let us lead and show the way. There is a God of love; our sins can be pardoned through the sacrifice of the Redeemer; there is a Holy Spirit to guide us, a Providence to watch over us, and palms at last for the hands of conquerors of this sinful world to wear. What a glorious prospect then before us! Adieu to vanity; adieu to sloth; adieu to all unchristian fears, distrustful of the care and the strength of our blessed Father above. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

I cordially sympathize with you in regard to that desolation of society and friendship to which you seem to be doomed. I wish some agreeable acquisitions of this kind may illumine the pensive shade; but, if not, is it not a gracious hand that has marked your destiny? Wait, then, till you see it accomplished, when unquestionably you will discover, with an exultation of gratitude and joy, that “all things have been done well.” The friendliest wish I can form for you is, that the less you enjoy of worldly felicities, the more you may obtain of the divine; that if God withholds from you any of his created blessings, it may be to give you more abundantly Himself; in short, that “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with you.” Oh, it is happy to be entirely resigned to the will of God; willing to travel, by any path his wisdom appoints, through the vale of life and tears; or, at one word when he shall

call, to haste away with willing flight into his presence, to mingle with the sweet and endless society there. "In his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore."

XXXIII. TO THE REV. DR. FAWCETT.

Battersea, Jan. 15, 1800.

DEAR SIR,—The pleasure with which I address one of my earliest and best benefactors, is mingled with a painful regret for having disappointed any of his hopes; but is mingled too with a reviving confidence that it will not be a *final* disappointment. As a proof that the unfortunate wanderer has not lost entirely his interest in your friendly regards, your letter was extremely grateful to me. But what shall I say of the long time that has passed without an acknowledgement from me of a favour so little expected, and cordial to my feelings as one of the days of returning spring? It were vain to attempt apology. I could plead only that each successive week I have intended to write to you, but that a certain fatality of procrastination, to which I have long been subject in respect of writing, has prevailed over me here too. It is more manly to confess than to extenuate. Yet it grieves me much that appearances do warrant an imputation of such ingratitude as I am certain I can never feel; and I will entreat you, dear sir, to lay aside in this one case the ancient rule of judging of the heart by the conduct. The sincere, unalterable respect with which I always think of you, assures my own mind that I have some claim to such an exception. I am very sorry for the conduct which leaves my *assertion* to stand the solitary testimony in my favour. Memory often recalls, with a sentiment of pensive but grateful interest, the season of my life which was passed under your immediate care; and those instructions, those kind anxieties, those prayers, and that example, of which the effect, I trust, cannot be lost to the latest moment of my life, no, nor in that eternity beyond. Will you accept from even me the wish that your cares may not fail of a happy success, and

an abundant reward? but of their reward they *cannot* fail; that is independent even of their success; it will be conferred by Him who knows and approves the hearts of his faithful servants, while sometimes his wisdom denies to their efforts the desired effect.

I receive with pleasure, but not without diffidence of myself, your congratulations on a happy revolution of my views and feelings. Oh, with what profound regret I review a number of inestimable years nearly lost to my own happiness, to social utility, and to the cause and kingdom of Christ! I often feel like one who should suddenly awake to amazement and alarm, on the brink of a gloomy gulf. I am scarcely able to retrace exactly through the mingled dreary shades of the past, the train of circumstances and influences which have led me so far astray; but amid solemn reflection, the conviction has flashed upon me irresistibly, that I must be fatally wrong. This mournful truth has indeed many times partially reached me before, but never so decisively, nor to awaken so earnest a desire for the full, genuine spirit of a disciple of Jesus. I see clearly that my strain of thinking and preaching has not been pervaded and animated by the evangelic sentiment, nor, consequently, accompanied by the power of the gospel, either to myself or to others. I have not come forward in the spirit of Paul, or Peter, or John; have not counted all things but loss that I might win Christ, and be found in him. It is true indeed that this kind of sentiment, when strongly presented, has always appealed powerfully to both my judgment and my heart; I have yielded my whole assent to its truth and excellence, and often longed to feel its heavenly inspiration; but some malady of the soul has still defeated these better emotions, and occasioned a mournful relapse into coldness of feeling, and sceptical or unprofitable speculation. I wonder as I reflect;—I am amazed how indifference and darkness *could* return over a mind which had seen such gleams of heaven. I hope that mighty grace will henceforward for ever save me from such infelicity. My habitual affections, however, are still much below the pitch that I desire. I wish above all things to have a continual, most solemn impression of the absolute need of the free salvation of Christ for my own soul, and

to have a lively faith in him, accompanied with all the sentiments of penitence, humility, and love. I would be transformed,—fired with holy zeal; and henceforth live not to myself, but to him that died and rose again. My utmost wish is to be a minor apostle; to be a humble, but active, devoted, and heroic servant of Jesus Christ; and in such a character and course, to minister to the eternal happiness of those within my sphere. My opinions are in substance decisively Calvinistic. I am firmly convinced, for instance, of the doctrines of original sin, predestination, imputed righteousness, the necessity of the Holy Spirit's operation to convert the mind, final perseverance, &c., &c.

As to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, I do not deny that I had once some degree of doubt, but not such a degree ever as to carry me anything near the adoption of an opposite or different opinion. It was by no means disbelief; it was rather a hesitation to decide, and without much, I think, of the vanity of speculation. But for a long while past I have fully felt the necessity of dismissing subtle speculations and distinctions, and of yielding a humble, cordial assent to the mysterious truth, just *as* and *because* the Scriptures declare it, without inquiring, "How can these things be?" Even at the time I refer to, I had not the slightest doubt respecting the doctrine of the atonement. I have always, without the interval of a moment, deemed it a grand essential of Christianity. How still more emphatically welcome it becomes as one discovers more of one's own heart! I deem it probable that my views on this and other subjects were invidiously misrepresented to you and some more of my friends. I have witnessed in many instances, with a disgusted recoiling of the heart, an astonishing promptitude to impute *heresy* to a man whose expressions have varied from the common phraseology, or whose conclusions have been cautious, and not in the tone of infallibility.

Within the last year I have drawn from experiment, example, and reflection, very important lessons respecting the best *manner* of preaching, as to diction, elocution, kind of illustrations, introduction or rejecting of *humorous* ideas, &c. The altogether of the manner I would choose, if I could seize it all at once, would be very different from my

former style. From unfavourable habits of mind, and inauspicious public situations, for the most part, I have acquired a disadvantageous elocution, which I fear will cost me considerable pains to correct. I have felt this particularly in my occasional public services about London, in which I have not in general felt free and happy, except in the missionary preaching in the villages, in which I have frequently been engaged. I have been so much occupied with the Africans since I came hither, and so gratified to prolong my stay within the advantages of the metropolis, that I have not yet begun to inquire after a regular station for preaching. Every consideration, however, and particularly the duty of making a renewed, zealous effort for public good, calls me now to make the inquiry. I have as yet thought but of one or two individuals to whom I can write. I have a transient engagement or two that will take up part of the spring. I thank you for the pleasure with which I read your book. It appears to me a just, elegant, and forcible exhibition of the grand principle of vital Christianity.

XXXIV. TO MRS. B. MANT.

Near Bristol, Feb. 17, 1801.

When I left you, about Christmas, it would have appeared, in looking forward, a long time to have delayed writing to you till past the middle of February; but in looking back, the time seems wonderfully short. This difference between the appearance of the past and of the future seems unfavourable to happiness, which, I think, would be more befriended by prospect appearing short, and retrospect appearing long. It looks but a short period since I quitted Chichester as a residence; but to look forward over the dim and shadowy field of so much time to come, seems a very long anticipation. However, my dear friend, though the train of future days seems in the prospect-vision to stretch out to a strangely protracted length, they will soon be gone. I congratulate you and myself that life is passing fast away. What a superlatively grand and consoling idea is that of Death!

Without this radiant idea, this delightful morning-star, indicating that the luminary of Eternity is going to rise, life would, to my view, darken into midnight melancholy. Oh! the expectation of living *here*, and living *thus*, always, would be indeed a prospect of overwhelming despair! But thanks to that fatal decree that dooms us to die!—thanks to that gospel which opens the vision of an endless life!—and thanks, above all, to that Saviour-friend who has promised to conduct all the faithful through the sacred trance of death into scenes of paradise and everlasting delight! I have the most assured persuasion that you, my dear friend, are destined, at no very remote period, to make this sublime transition. And shall not this divine prospect console you for all you have lost and suffered, and animate you to triumph over every desolate feeling by which you are environed? If you are fatigued in life's journey—if the scene and the persons through which you pass are inhospitable—see yonder! the palace divine, the angel-friends, and the region of ever-blooming flowers are nigh! It is not far to go; be patient, go on, and live for ever.

With musings like these my mind is familiar. Everything that interests my heart leads me into this mingled emotion of melancholy and sublime. I have lost all taste for the light and the gay; rather, I never had any such taste. I turn disgusted and contemptuous from insipid and shallow folly, to lave in the stream, the tide,—of deeper sentiments. There I swim, and dive, and rise, and gambol, with all that wild delight which would be felt by a fish, after panting out of its element awhile, when flung into its own world of waters by some friendly hand. . . . I have criminally neglected regular, studious thinking for many years: I must try whether it is now too late to resume a habit so essential to solid wisdom and real strength of mind. I have certainly learnt much from various society, and have in some degree improved my powers of social communication; but I feel in a most mortifying degree some mental and moral deficiencies, which I know that nothing can correct but a rigid discipline, which will absolutely require the seriousness of solitude. My greatest defects are in regard to religion, on which subject, as it respects myself, I want to have a profound and solemn investigation, which I foresee must be mingled with

a great deal of painful and repentant feeling. What a serious task it is to confront one's self with faithful truth! and see one's self by a light that will not flatter! But it must be done, and the earliest season is therefore the best. At the last tribunal no one will regret having been a habitual and rigorous judge of self. It is an unhappy and enormous fault to live on amid uncertainties respecting the state of one's mind, and with occasional eclipses of those delightful hopes which shine from the other world. I must therefore assemble all my convictions around me, and finally settle the great account I have with God!

XXXV. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Downend, March 18, 1801.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—You gained nothing by your affected formality of dress. What was the use of substituting *Sir* for *Friend*, when amid the plaudits of the circle to which I repeatedly read your letter, I could so easily explode its commencement by the proud feeling with which I said, "The writer of this is my friend?" Your first sentence was meant as a vulture's beak; I thus brake it in an instant.

I should have been still more proud of this luminous friend if he had been *so* luminous as to leave me no refuge in the consciousness of his mistaking my character; if his faculties had been *so* powerful as to be *just*, though that justice had been in a language ten times more severe. While I acknowledge his strong sight, I feel that he chases me by moonlight, which allows me to squat in a shade where he cannot find me. If he were *not* my friend, how I should laugh to see him pass by in pursuit of his own shadow; but as he *is* my friend, I had rather suffer by his possessing an unerring sense. I have had several occasions of knowing that you do not understand me entirely; there is both good and evil in my heart which you have not seen. There is yet an apartment or two in the interior of my mind, into which you have not quite sagacity enough to penetrate, nor quite candour enough for me to admit you.

This deduction from your intellectual force still leaves me

to admire it. And here again, what a miserable philosophy of the human mind you must have adopted, not to be certain that, unless interest or malignity intervene, superior mind is necessarily attached to superior mind, all over the world. Genius hails its few brothers with a most fraternal warmth. I have too much talent not to be attracted by yours, and to attract it; you could not shake me off, if you would. We are both elevated so much as to confront each other conspicuously through the clear space above the heads of the crowd, and cannot help a pointed recognition of each other's mental visage. Thus I often converse with you in imagination, and revolt at paper and pens, which tell sentiments so faintly, so formally, so slowly, and so few. Our minds are two rival streams, and whatever invidious tracts dissociate their courses, they *must* approximate; they are destined to meet again; and to swell and exult in their confluence.—Or, do you dissent from this estimate of yourself and of me? Do you assign *yourself* to a humbler rank? Be content, then; it were ridiculous for a gudgeon to affect the company of a whale. Or do you degrade *me* from the equality? Abandon, then, such an unfortunate production; it were still more ridiculous for a whale to pursue a gudgeon. It was not any feeling of hurt vanity, was it, that dictated your vindictive sentences?—the vanity of a mind which, regarding me as a thermometer, was vexed to perceive its own impotence of heat? It would be enough, you know, in that case, just to say, *the instrument is a bad one*; thus you *have* very properly ascribed my silence to “apathy.” If I am the victim of apathy, it must be by that fascination which betrays into the very thing most anxiously avoided; for, next to remorse, there is no state of the mind I dread and detest so much. Perhaps you think there can be in the world no stronger test of feeling, or the want of it, than the bundle of snakes you sent me last; in sooth, a lock of Medusa's hair. It is a very humorous thing, though, to see a philosopher attempting to torment a stone!

But you allow me a few “sensibilities,” which you say faithfully attend my dear self. Indeed you treat them very rudely; you are like boys attempting to catch birds;—however soft and gentle the approach, if the coy things fly away to the next bush, the wicked brats then throw stones

after them. You frighten my poor sensibilities, you do; and you must forgive them, if, like timid little chickens, they run under my own wing at sight of the great dun-coloured hawk, with fierce black eyes, and a shrill note; you must not tempt them to fly along in friendly company with the malicious fowl, as I have seen foolish little birds sometimes do, to be devoured.

You say, "*many* have received the same impression." While at Battersea, I knew perfectly that all the world was thinking of me; but since I left, I had in my humility supposed it probable that mighty multitude might have forgotten me, as I knew that *absent* trifles could not occupy its majestic thoughts. Or, if I thought it all the world's *duty* to be thinking of me, it was of course for me to attribute to it somewhat of my own sad vice of forgetting the absent.

I have been too much flattered, you say. In truth, it is currently said, we are both spoiled by our friends; but, I having heard it said in addition, that your spoiling makes you very *ostentatious*, you will forgive me, if, in my solicitude to avoid this consequence of *my* spoiling, I have fallen into the opposite fault of reserve. But I am not irrecoverable; a little more of this soft incense might tempt me forth again. Instead of this, you salute me in your *Philippics* with the smoke of brimstone. You wish the criminal's "heart broken." I should be sorry this operation were performed by your surgical hand, as the ingredients of your letter seem to indicate there are no *cordials* remaining in your shop.

You must have been taking a month's instruction from the "*Xantippe*" you have so kindly destined me to "love and cherish;" but as *I* am to have her in order to learn to write friendly letters, how much better a man I must be than you, who have only learnt to write virulent ones. If you had not been congenial, you could not have profited so fast. Let me know, however, who she is; for I cannot help suspecting *your* language is not *hers*; I do think any woman of so much sense would have expressed it in more gracious terms.

I cannot join in your reverence for that amazing busy activity of the world on which you turn so poetical, to mortify me with the contrast. Is it cynical to ask, "What

is effected by it all?" Much of this huge bustle seems to me as important, if it were as innocent, as the rippling course of a rill, or the frisks of a company of summer flies. If I had the power of touching a large part of mankind with a spell, amid all this inane activity, it should be this short sentence, "*Be quiet, be quiet.*" Particularly, I have often thought that the moral and literary world suffers the greatest mischief from the crowd of authors. Seriously, it appears to me an enormous impediment to popular improvement; so much that is indifferent, or worse, occupies the time and the paper that else might and would be appropriated to the noblest productions of mind. . . . Fortunately, however, the world has not beheld all that genius can do. There remain two mighty spirits who have not yet disclosed all their terrible potencies on the "foughten field." When the cause of virtue and truth is just sinking in destruction, *we two* shall rush forth amain, like *Mounier and Dessaix* at Marengo, and change the aspect of the world in a moment!

You suggest the idea of *fame*. Cold as you pronounce me, I should prefer the deep animated affection of one person whom I could entirely love, to all the tribute Fame could levy within the amplest circuit of her flight; which would be of the same value to me, alive or dead, as the cries of penguins about Cape Horn at this hour. A Christian surely should despise this object; and I can suppose a being too elevated and too happy to think of it. Imagine a seraph, laving in the boundless ocean of Mind, or flying through the hemisphere with a comet in his hand, —*he* cares nothing about fame.

I wished to have got together a row of *nettle* sentences like yours; but verily I am either too dull or too kind. I have been walking in the fields, inhaling the mild breath of Nature, and meeting her sweetest smile. I felt the charm through all my affections, and forcibly felt, spite of all your accusations, and the appearances that seem to warrant them, that you have a large and unalterable interest there. I have returned quite in the disposition to acknowledge my neglect and my indolence, and to deplore that I have indeed proceeded but a little way on the "path of celestials;" but, take me along with you; I am ready to

advance as your associate and rival onward to the frontier of the world ;—nor stop *there* !

My mind needs amelioration ; it is a strange one. I am obtaining the analysis of it, piece by piece, at the cost of a great and sometimes painful attention.

I congratulate you on whatever possibilities of happiness you have gained in the addition to your family. Has no one suggested it may be time for you to study the subject of education ? Have you really begun your plan of *Adversaria* ? The series of *mine* has reached some number between five and six hundred. Let me urge you not to neglect this. You luxuriate among happy sentences and images which ought not to be let vanish, like fairy bowers, to be seen no more. Take one book for pointed, philosophic, or fanciful articles ; another exclusively for the striking passages in your unwritten sermons. I would eagerly begin such a plan as this last, but for the ominous state of my eyes, which very often concurs with other anticipations, and with the native tone of my heart, to wrap me in the saddest melancholy. I have a thousand times recollected a thought uttered by you in one of our rambles in a gloomy mood : “ Say, I shall be damned—how foolish, then, to think of these trifling introductory ills ;—but say, I shall be saved, obtain boundless felicity, in a short time—how weak, then, to complain of these momentary pains ! ”

You do no more than justice to the “ circle ” where I have spent some of the most delicious months of my life. You know who is the centre of that circle ; near enough to her I have constantly felt as if I could pass an age away without ever being tired.* The ladies to whom I have

* The course of my life since I left Battersea has included a good deal of the agreeable. The greater part has still been spent among ladies ; and I enjoy the society of sensible women beyond any other. I am always happy when the sentimentalism of my character, which otherwise evaporates away in vague wishes, and the visions of fancy, finds real objects to interest it up to the tone of *complacency*,—how much farther this deponent saith not. When thus interested, I become animated, profuse of sentiment, passionately fond of conversation, and time flies away with a strange rapidity. A great part of my time I have passed with the younger Mrs. C. and Miss S., luxuriating over a wide diffusion of sentiment and fancy. Sometimes we read ; but this seldom succeeds much, for we generally digress to an endless series of remarks and opinions of our own. We have agitated a great number of interesting questions ; and have sometimes

read this response, are astonished at such effrontery in a criminal, as they say I really am, almost to the extent of your charge, before his judge. I assured them that a gallant defence was one of the best methods to propitiate him; he would be most dogged to a coward.

XXXVI. TO THE REV. DR. BYLAND.

April, 1801.

DEAR SIR,—I am ashamed to have detained the sermon so long;* as I read it immediately after receiving it from you, and with still more attention since. I have not been in Bristol since I saw you, except one wet night to inquire after a parcel, when I was unfit to call or stop any where.

found and sometimes scattered flowers, over the region of thought. These two ladies are greatly beyond the common order of intellect and taste. While they are employed in working I sit down, sometimes a number of hours together, and pour forth all my imagination or knowledge can supply; and they call me enthusiastic, cynical, proud, or singular, by turns. I take a peculiar pleasure in dissecting the system of fashion, parade, ceremony, and trifles. I have examined, ridiculed, and execrated it in a hundred forms, and with every variety of language and illustration. They substantially agree with me, but accuse me of darting for ever toward the extreme. . . . I preach here with considerable pleasure; and the family have expressed their wish that I may in some manner settle here. I often see various company here, and in Bristol, sometimes with pleasure; but often, every man who has tried the world knows, company is assembled for the assassination of time;—time destined, alas, to perish by a mightier hand, but men are willing to assist in its destruction. My mind is still familiar with melancholy musings; no place can banish them, and no society. There is "*that something still which prompts the eternal sigh.*" Yet I would not be insensible to the pleasures that life does yield; I would not be insensible to the value of those that are past.—*Mr. Foster to Mrs. Benwell, June 11, 1800.*

- * A discourse on Isa. xiv. 10, "Art thou become like unto us?" composed and delivered at Northampton when the author was in his twenty-third year (Nov. 26, 1775), and preached again at Bristol in 1776; "it seemed each time of its delivery to be heard with unusual seriousness, and in one instance, at least, had a very deep and salutary effect. (See the biographical account of the Rev. William Kilpin in Dr. Rippon's Baptist Register, vol. i. p. 257.) A copy having been shown in a distant part of the kingdom to some very respectable friends who urged its publication," Dr. R. "felt inclined to follow their advice," and prepared it for the press; but relinquished the intention in consequence, most probably, of the suggestions contained in Mr. Foster's letter.

I am not certain to what extent you would wish me to express an opinion, though very certain that to *any* extent your candour would forgive the freedom. If it were a question as to publishing the sermon or not, I would venture, after acknowledging in very strong terms the ingenuity, the variety, and the forcible description with which it abounds, to suggest a very few general considerations.

As *first*, placing myself in the situation, I should be very reluctant to appear conspicuously in the class of what have been denominated "damnation writers." With the exception of Baxter and a few more, I am afraid that those who have expatiated most on infernal subjects, have felt them the least. A predilection for such subjects, and a calm, deliberate, minute, exhibition of them, always strikes me as a kind of *Christian cruelty*, the spirit of an *auto da fé*. I sincerely doubt the utility of a laborious, expanded display of the horrors of hell: as far as I have had the means of observing the actual effect, I have found it far the greatest where one would anxiously wish it might not exist at all—in the minds of the timid, scrupulous, and melancholic. The utmost space I would allot in my writings to this part of the revelations of our religion should not at any rate exceed the proportion which, in the New Testament, this part of truth bears to the whole of the sacred book, the grand predominant spirit of which is love and mercy.

2. Though for a passing illustration it would be striking, I greatly doubt if such an application of the text, so formally and definitively made, be warrantable. Is the passage any thing more than a finely poetic account of the simple fact, the death of the tyrant? No part of this sublime ode appears to me to look beyond the grave, *the state of being dead*, or to bear any reference to the feelings or accostings of departed spirits.

3. Does not extreme *particularity* on such a subject lose the effect, either by harassing the feelings into a revolting aversion to think of the subject at all, or sometimes by supplying a *half-amusing* detail of curiosity, like Virgil's Tartarus, rather than making a concentrated mighty impression on the heart?

4. I doubt if revelation has any where given ground to

suppose, or if reason, without revelation, can be cruel enough to suppose, such a superlative malicious and horrid style of greetings, even in the infernal world. Something very different from this would be indicated in our Lord's description of the solicitude of the rich man, that his wicked connexions might not come into the same place of torment—a feeling surely which would not, if they *did* come, hail them with such an execrable malignity of pleasure.

5. I feel, in the strain of some parts of the salutations of the wretched spirits something too *familiar*, and even approaching too much to the air of *spiteful fun*, for the dreadful solemnity of the scene, and the supposed profound and infinite intensity of their feelings.

6. In the instantaneous transition, towards the latter end, from hell to heaven, with the use of the same language in heaven as so lately with so much adaptedness in hell, I felt some degree of violence. It looks like an *expedient* to escape from the persecution of the former society and salutations. It has the appearance of needing to perform a kind of *quarantine* after coming from the great kingdom of plagues.

Other remarks on particular passages may have occurred, but are scarcely of importance enough to be mentioned.

The few observations I have expressed are entirely submitted, as being the dictates of a taste which may be wrong; and the unceremonious manner in which they are communicated, is owing to that freedom which I always feel the most completely with those for whose judgment and candour I have the most entire respect; of *you*, therefore, I shall not need to entreat forgiveness.

I am, dear sir,

Your sincere friend and servant,

J. FOSTER.

XXXVII. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Downend, Dec., 1801.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—A small number of intervals so long as that since I wrote to you before, will conclude the short

day of life,—a life not very auspicious to the best order of mental intercourse—for letters do not deserve any such name,—and this is one of the principal causes of my dilatoriness in writing them; a letter (though I am very glad to receive one) is so poor a substitute for the expansive discussion and romance of four or six hours. I was more gratified with the intercourse of your last visit than in any former season of my communications with you; and felt, after you went away, great regret that our situations are so distant from each other. I always feel that your society has the effect of a powerful mental discipline; and I could not help sketching in fancy the large augmentation of knowledge and power I should derive from the earnest, habitual co-operation of two minds, certainly well adapted to exercise each other. I should be happy to flatter myself that future time may have some chances of bringing us into more frequent or long-continued contact.

. . . . Here one recollects that prince of magicians, Coleridge; whose mind, too, is clearly more original and illimitable than Hall's. Coleridge is indeed sometimes less perspicuous and impressive by the *distance* at which his mental operations are carried on. Hall works his enginery *close by you*, so as to endanger your being caught, and torn by some of the wheels; just as one has felt sometimes when environed by the noise and gigantic movements of a great mill. I am very sorry that by means of a short-hand writer, or by any other means, some of Hall's sermons cannot be secured and printed. It is probable they would on the whole be equal to Saurin's; as to manly simplicity, much preferable; for I now dislike Saurin's ingenious arrangements. I read yesterday his sermon on the Passions; the greatest, I think, that I ever read or heard. . . . Hall spoke of you, and attributed "a great deal" (I believe was the expression) "of genius," but reprobated your written style, on the same account that I always do; its want of simplicity. I have heard in Bristol that Coleridge means to go and take his family to France.

At the invitation of Mrs. Snooke's family, I went to Bourton, to Coles's ordination; not at all caring, as you may suppose, about the ordination; but pleased with an occasion of visiting the family, though sorry that *one* of

them was absent in London, and sorry not to meet you there, as I half expected. Hinton was there with a very superior sermon. I like Coles very much, for his equal mixture of sense, piety, simplicity (as appears), and kindness. . . .

XXXVIII. TO MRS. B. MANT.

Downend, Dec. 14, 1801.

The sight of frost and snow occasions me a mortifying recollection that so the earth was clad when I last wrote to you, and that therefore almost a whole year has intervened. I feel it very shameful, and am utterly at a loss for apology; indeed apology, when the most plausible, is a very shabby substitute for propriety of action. If, however, you could see into my soul, you would perceive the regard I have always felt to remain undiminished. . . . My father and mother, and each of my very few other friends, have the same accusation to make, and to them I am reduced to the same style of penitential confession. I say "very few friends," correctly, for I have not added one to the list since I saw you. I have but little ambition this way,—for there is a kind of convergency in my feelings which makes it quite impossible for me to be much attached to many. With wonder I hear some people talk of one dear friend, and another most intimate friend, and a third very particular friend, and twenty, or twenty hundred charming friends, all of whom they are equally attached to, and every one of whom they are so *infinitely* glad to see; you would suppose their hearts were large enough to fill the globe. At the same time, I by no means vote for the total dedication of affections to *one* object; this always appears to me misanthropic, and therefore immoral. It is absurd too, to imagine that any one person can possess such a supreme monopoly of excellence, that the claims of all other beings are annihilated. I am pleased to find or believe that there is some good in every one, and sorry to find that no one is without some fault; and when I consider how many faults I have myself, I scarcely venture to flatter myself that any one can ever be very deeply or very long attached to me.

I have the sincerest value for affection, but am unwilling to take the pains to deserve it; and it were ridiculous to expect it to come gratuitously.

I have been, since I wrote to you last, just the same kind of being I was before, and just similarly employed. I have been wishing for innumerable things I have made no effort to obtain; as, for instance, to be very learned, to be very wise, to be very eloquent, to be very pleasing, to improve very fast, to do some little good, to gain a decisive self-government, to get rid of a number of infamous bad habits, which have long been and still remain desperately attached to me, &c.; but all this will not come down, like gentle April showers, from the sky; all these things require that a man set about conjuring, might and main, and—*I am no conjurer*. I continue to preach, indeed, with I hope an equal degree of acceptableness, and perhaps some little effect. And I continue to *talk* with a copious profusion of words; as to *things*, that is another question.

. . . . Imagination has often placed before me, since I saw it, your corner of Chichester; but chiefly that little quiet house in which I have passed so many interesting hours. I am willing to believe your health is at least as tolerable as when I saw you. It was then winter. You *were* to walk out a great deal when the spring and summer came; *did* you do your duty? Sweet verdure, meads, trees, flowers, birds, and the spirit of health did not fail to invite you; did you—is it possible, thus courted, that you could—refuse? Yes, my friend, I know you so well as to be afraid, even though I know that no one has a more animated taste for these pleasures, that you *did* refuse. I shall never forget the rural beauty that so often regaled my solitary musings in your neighbourhood. I shall never forget that Watery Lane, and the adjacent delicious meadows. My present locality is, in this respect, by no means so charming. . . . If your county partook of the same bounty of nature as other parts, it must have been a delicious year. I am persuaded you find in religious felicities the best compensation for defects of satisfaction from the world, and even from friends. The supreme Friend is always accessible, and always and infinitely kind. Let us endeavour, my dear friend, to embrace this truth, as if it

were a benignant angel, to our hearts, and it will pour the energy of a divine consolation into the soul. The habitual melancholy of my spirits increases each year. I am not fit for life. My eyes are not much worse, but no better than when I saw you.

XXXIX. TO MRS. R. MANT.

Downend, March 9, 1802.

. I was so much ashamed of my negligence when I wrote before, and am so very much delighted to hear from you again, that I feel myself quite compelled to sit down and write to you immediately. You may, my friend, be assured that, writing or silent, I retain the same sincere and friendly regard which I have ever felt, and I think it cannot die away till memory fail. Your virtues and your kindness often return on my remembrance with a very grateful influence, something like what I have felt this morning in observing the first symptoms of approaching spring. I always deem you one of the persons most eminently deserving to be happy that I have known; and I am persuaded, I am *certain*, you *will* be happy, and sublimely so. I cannot be sanguine in painting for you scenes of pleasures in *this* world,—alas, hope has long since ceased to be sanguine for *myself*;—but, what will soon signify this world to us? we are passing away with all the speed of time; let us look forward to the grand vision beyond the shades of death! *There* is our country; there is the sweet paradise of peace, and ever-blooming delights; there is our Father's house. I have been thinking for some time past, with more than usual clearness and seriousness of thought of the vanity of all things in this life. It has not been a vain speculation, just adapted to be uttered in so many sentences, to be soon forgotten both by the speaker and those that hear, but a cogent, convincing, and, in some degree, influential train of thought. The effect of it has been, in a measure, to make me more fervent in supplicating the final felicity of the soul, be the present life what it may; to make me more resigned to the determination of

Providence, and more concerned to fulfil the *duties* of this transient period, whatever become of its pleasures. We have passed a large, a very large part of our life—soon the end will come; and when we look back from the region of immortality, how trivial will appear all the present sorrows and cares—trivial, except in point of *utility*, in which point they may have been most important and advantageous. “These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

I often sympathize with the desolate feelings which you suffer while surrounded by —, of whom, on this very account, it is impossible for me not to entertain a very mean opinion. But be comforted; you have had very sufficient evidence that their habits, feelings, thoughts, and tastes are by no means adapted to mingle with yours, and *therefore* you are left solitary. Shall you be sorry that your mind is too serious, too thoughtful, and too religious to suit their society? Could you be willing, in these important points, to humble yourself down to a complacent agreement with their levity or their oddity? You ought to feel your superiority, and dismiss the anxious wish for a companionship which you have amply found you cannot purchase but by descending to their level; a level where you would never feel happy, if you *did* descend to it. Is not this fair consolation? And oh! above all, think of your great Father in heaven, whose friendship *can* be gained, and daily enjoyed, and kept for ever! This grand idea often flashes on my mind like lightning from the sky, while I am musing over my desolate feelings, something like yourself, and regretting the want of those tender connections which sometimes seem as if they would give life so much more interest and value. The more totally we are devoted to God, my friend, the more independent we shall be for pleasure on all other beings. What a sublime consolation!—if we can *not* have the creatures, we *can* have the Creator. And then, ere long, we shall see and love, and be loved by the *noblest of his creatures*, the great inhabitants of that superior world, where none of the imperfections of vain and fickle mortals can intrude!

. I have long resigned the juvenile hope which

spreads over life the fond visions of felicity. As an ancient hero said, "I fix one certain trust in death alone."

XL. TO MRS. B. MANT.

Downend, Feb. 1, 1803.

My memory is in general sufficiently defective to fulfil all its duties of forgetting—with the most laudable punctuality; but on this occasion I have been charging and enjoining it to be peculiarly faithful in its task of oblivion; I mean in respect to the time when I wrote last, and when you replied. I well remember the *contents* of your letter, but I do not remember the *date*, and I dare not open it just now for fear of seeing that date.

My remembrance of you does not depend on particular dates of months and days, nor on any other thing foreign to that internal mind in which it faithfully and permanently resides. There it would always exist without any external object to awaken it or keep it alive, and always connected with a very cordially friendly feeling. Yet sometimes this remembrance is forcibly recalled by any thing that resembles any part of your house, your furniture, your vine, or any of the scenes in the vicinity of Chichester. This association of ideas is a very curious thing; here is an instance of it—the elegant little drawing which you gave me has been out of sight a considerable time, in one of my boxes, whence I just now took it out. No sooner did it appear than a swarm of recollections got about me, presenting, as with a hundred tiny fairy hands, a hundred other miniature pictures to my fancy; as for instance, portraits, of you, of Mr. De —, of Miss W—, and many other persons; the pictures in the little room which I once occupied, and a sight of your *vine*; but here imagination was to produce a double effect at the same time; for I would not see it fruitless and leafless, but made it appear in a green and tantalizing form, with several such good-natured clusters bending almost within the casement for me to take 'em,—but, in vain! But how often this very object has been before me in reality, and not as a vision of imagination.

Yes, I think of it, and ask myself with a kind of wonder,—“Have I really been very often in that very place where these objects are real?” I feel it difficult fully to grasp the idea, that this person—I—am the same that have been a long time in *that* place, and am now in *this* place, so far removed. Did I really once live at Chichester? I really do believe I did;—I certainly either did, or have dreamed that I did; and I seem to have the images before me even now, of many things and persons which I saw there, and something very like recollection of things that I did and said there. I seem to recollect a neat meeting-house, in which, methinks I used to walk till I wore one of the aisles so much as to alarm some of the good people for the safety of the place. There was a long, solitary, rural lane, called “Watery Lane,” in which I verily think I used sometimes to muse; and I seem to recollect even now some of the sentiments that I felt there, and some of the objects which I saw. Would you believe that I recollect an incomparably beautiful reflection of the sky in a small piece of water there; a grasshopper of very great size; an adventure with an ox; a pair of magnificent butterflies; and a most beautiful rainbow scene, which I at the time anxiously charged my imagination to retain for ever?—not to mention all the apparitions and horrid visions that I conversed with in that place. It is very gratifying thus to be able to retain the images of some objects and scenes long after they have been removed far from sight. But what a number of ideas imparted by objects once present to these eyes are irrevocably gone! Since I left you more than three years and a half have now elapsed, a considerable and serious space to have advanced toward the final, fatal hour. Many, that both of us then knew alive, are now removed to the invisible region. To us, my friend, the time will come, and no point to which it is possible for our life to be protracted can justly be called remote, while we see time pass so fast away. Well, and let it come! I am persuaded my excellent friend still regards the prospect of death as the prime of her pleasures. And with this sublime consciousness, how little you can envy the vain pleasures around you! These pleasures will soon fade into a dreary autumn; yours are beginning to bud into the living green of an eternal spring. You

would not exchange—no enlightened mind would exchange—one of the consolatory and radiant ideas that beam upon you sometimes from *hereafter*, for all the delights for which fools solicit and worship this world. Say to yourself, “I have not parade and splendour, nor giddy juvenile gaiety, nor amusements, nor so much of the kind sympathies of friendship as I could wish; but I have the promises and the fidelity of a God, the assurance of a guardian Providence, the intercession of a Redeemer, the visions of Eternity, the prospects of Paradise.” My friend, I love to suggest such ideas to *you*, because they are appropriate to you. If I were to meet some of your gay neighbours in a pensive mood, I should not know how to console them, but with you I have no difficulty.

Thoughts of this kind would not come with so good a grace from me, if I myself were, the while, enjoying all the pleasures of this life. But the case is not so. My lot has probably some advantages over yours, but it is not such as to prevent my needing the full force of the consolations which I wish to suggest to you. And, my friend, would it be a good thing for life to be so crowded with temporal felicities as to make us forget eternity? Take for your motto the text, “All things work together for good to them that love God.”

I do not rate the pleasures of social intercourse so low as that I could not wish you had some one or two pleasant friends to beguile and exhilarate your long evenings, this wintry season. But, my friend, we cannot *transform* our neighbours; we cannot *create* interesting human beings; nor can we bring them flying through the air from distant places, like the witches that used to ride on broomsticks, and make them, at will, alight by the fireside. Consider, too, that as we cannot make others such as *we* wish, so neither do we choose to make ourselves such as *they* wish. My friend might have more society, if she would only be vain and frivolous; but will she, for the sake of the society, give up the dignity of character which is of more value to her than that which she might gain by sacrificing it?

. . . . My mind is perhaps gradually but very slowly improving in knowledge, and the power of displaying and using it. My habits are more retired and solitary than in the

former part of the time of my residence here, and more than half the visits that I make are rather from a kind of duty of office than from inclination.

My long respected friend, Mr. Hughes, has spent a month in this neighbourhood each autumn since I have been here. His company is always the highest excitement of my faculties. He is a very superior man.

Mrs. C. is still my principal friend here; and time does not lower my estimate of her understanding and worth. But she is often absent on long visits to her relations in different places.

. . . . I find myself not completely formed for friendship, for I often seclude myself in gloomy abstraction, and say, "All this availeth me nothing."

Love is the word that stands next to friendship, as we all know. In your letter, you make a sly allusion to this, in the way of hinting, that I have *often* been in the predicament. My good friend, you are mistaken. I have not been often in love, nor ever much, *unless I am so now*. I was not in love at all at Chichester; for the romantic fancy about Caroline,* whose face I never saw, could not be so called. In the present instance I am certainly as much attached, and as likely to continue so as the conviction of uncommon excellence can make me; and not altogether without return, but am not in the near prospect of ultimate attainment.

. . . . If you will write soon, I pledge myself to answer within a month at the longest. My neglect of writing does not give the estimate which I form of the letters I receive, or of the value which I place on the friends that write them. It is owing as I have probably told you before, to the influence of the *stars*. I have not written till yesterday to Mr. Hughes ever since I saw him, which is almost half a year since.

XLI. TO MRS. R. MANT.

Downend, 1803.

I do not know what day of the month it is, nor whether it be April or May, but I believe it is some days past the

* Letters xxviii. xxx.

time that I promised to write to you. The last week or two I have been very busy between society and some dry, laborious composition that I have been about. It always gives me the sincerest pleasure to hear from you, and I, therefore, thank you for your last letter, which, however, gave me less pleasure than some of your former ones, on account of its description of the state of your health. I can completely feel that such a headache for a considerable portion of the finer part of the year must be a most distressing companion, and am reduced again to the impotent wish that something could be recommended or done that should relieve you. One often feels it a melancholy thing to see or know that a friend suffers, and to be unable to do more than repeat the lesson of patience. That lesson, however, becomes forcible and important, when it is recollected that He who sends afflictions is the infinitely Good and Wise,—who does all things well, and never gives his servants pain, even for a moment, but for their advantage. Remember, my friend, what a sublime compensation he is able to make you for all these troubles, and often read and muse on those promises in which he has engaged to make you eternally happier for the present pains. Think how completely all the griefs of this mortal life will be compensated by one age, for instance, of the felicities beyond the grave, and then think that one age multiplied ten thousand times, is not so much to eternity as one grain of sand is to the whole material universe. Think what a state it will be to be growing happier and happier still as ages pass away, and yet leave something still happier to come. Think whether the most adoring and emphatical gratitude will not be often kindled amidst those never-ending ages, when it is felt that no small part of this felicity is the strict consequence of those pains and griefs which were so oppressive in the poor state of mortal life. It would seem a great thing if I were authorized to prophesy to you, that within a month you should obtain perfect vigorous health, be surrounded by the most interesting friends, and amidst unlimited affluence;—all which you should retain to the last week of your life;—with what elation of feeling I should at first be eager to write the prediction; and what an object of envy you would soon become. But oh, what a despicable

trifle would be all this compared with what is really before you, on the assurance of the word of Him that cannot lie! And if this latter were, you were certain, within one month of your attainment, would not you feel the most animated emotion at the prospect? Let not the difference between this supposed month, and the uncertain length of life before you, which may extend through a number of years, oppressed by languor and affliction, extinguish all the pleasure of such a hope. Let us devote our most serious industry to the great concern of being habitually prepared for the coming of the Son of Man.

There are many affecting admonitions. I have been acquainted, ever since I came into this neighbourhood, with the widow of a man whom I knew and highly respected, and who died two or three years since, leaving this widow and two daughters (young women of very great excellence), in Bristol, where I have generally called on them when I have spent a few hours in the town. Yesterday (not having called on them for several weeks) I entered, with a lively, unthinking air, the parlour, where the elder lady and one of the daughters were sitting at work, and said, in a gay, voluble manner, "How does the world go? how have you all been since I saw you? where's Sarah?" I had slightly, at my entrance, perceived a certain gravity somewhat more than usual, but did not particularly mind it, as they were a habitually grave family, being Quakers. After some hesitation, the daughter replied, "You have not heard then of our loss? Sarah is dead."

I suppose your town has scarcely escaped the influenza, which has been so extensive and fatal. Most people in this neighbourhood have had it, and some have been carried off. I have been entirely exempt. The complaint in my eyes is more troublesome during all the warmer part of the year than in the winter; of course I begin to feel it now in the spring. It is often such as to require some exercise of patience, besides being a gloomy omen, as I still consider it, of the final loss of sight. You cannot wonder that this is a melancholy anticipation, sufficient to damp all the gaiety of life, if I had any inclination of that kind. The double complaint in my throat is not quite gone, but materially better. I am sorry to think it probable that

you are debarred from the luxuries of this delicious season. I can answer for the enchantment you feel, if you are able sometimes to take a walk up the lane and through the fields. The whole welcome visitation of blossoms, sweet verdure, cuckoos, and nightingales, is come down on the earth, and made it all a new world within the last month. All the beauties of the scene have been displayed to me this afternoon in an extended rural walk, in which I anxiously endeavoured to seize all the magic images and fix them in my mind for a perpetual Paradise of Fancy, to have recourse to, perhaps, after I lose the power of receiving any more images by the eye. I could not help being amazed at the power which could thus, by means that none can understand, and in the space of a few weeks, or even days, pour such a deluge of charms over the creation. We should cultivate as much as possible, the habit of being led by everything we contemplate to the great First Cause.

Here it becomes necessary to advert to Foster's literary pursuits. It appears from the preceding correspondence, that even while at Brearley, Foster entertained some indeterminate projects of authorship. With this view, probably, he commenced, before the age of twenty, the practice of committing to paper observations on natural objects, illustrations of human character, and reflections on morals and religion. From these he selected such as appeared worthy of preservation, and formed them into a series, carefully written and numbered, under the quaint title of "*A Chinese Garden of Flowers and Weeds.*" In the present volume it has already been quoted as "*the Journal.*" It was continued through successive years, and the last portion appears to have been written during his residence at Downend. It contains in all eight hundred and ten articles. On his return from Ireland he informs

Mr. Hughes that he was engaged on "a kind of moral Essay;" the subject, however, is not mentioned. Of his early productions none have been preserved, excepting the following Essay, which will be read with interest, as a specimen of his juvenile style of thinking.

ON THE GREATNESS OF MAN.

MANKIND viewed collectively, as an assemblage of being, presents to contemplation an object of astonishing magnitude. It has spread over this wide world to essay its powers against every obstacle, and every element; and to plant in every region its virtues and its vices. As we pass along the plains, we perceive them marked by the labours, the paths, or the habitations of man. Proceeding forwards across rivers, or through woods, or over mountains, we still find man in possession on the other side. Each valley that opens, and each hill that rises before us, presents a repetition of human abodes, contrivances, and appropriations; for each house, and garden, and field (in some places almost each tree), reminds us that there is a person somewhere who is proud to think and say, "This is mine."

All the beautiful and rugged varieties of earth, from the regions of snow to those of burning sand, have been pervaded by man. If we sail to countries beyond the seas we find him still, though he may disclaim our language, our manners, and our colour. And if we discover lands where he is not, we presently quit them, as if the Creator too were a stranger there. Here and there indeed a desert retreat is inhabited by an ascetic, whom the solemnity of solitude has drawn thither; or by a felon, whom guilt has driven thither.

While he extends himself thus over the world, behold his collective grandeur. It appears prominent in great cities built by his own hands—it is seen in structures that

look like temples erected to Time, which promise by their strength to await the latest years of his continuance with men; and seem to plead by their magnificence against the decree which dooms them to perish when he shall abandon them;—it is seen in wide empires, and in armies, which may be called the talons of imperial power—to give security to happiness where that power is just, but for cruel ravage where it is tyrannical:—it is displayed in fleets; in engines which operate as if informed with a portion of the actuating power of his own mind; in the various productions of beauty; the discoveries of science; in subjected elements, and a cultivated globe. The sentiment with which we contemplate this scene is greatly augmented when imagination bears her flaming torch into the enormous shade which overspreads the past, and passes over the whole succession of human existence, with all its attendant prodigies. When we have made the addition for futurity, of supposing the human race extensively enlightened, apprised of their dignity and power, and combined in a far stricter union, till the vast ocean of mind prevail over all its accustomed boundaries, and sweep away many of the evils which oppress the world,—we may pause awhile and indulge our amazement. Such an aggregate view of the multitude, achievements, and powers of Man is grand. It has the air of a general and endless triumph.

But we know that mere multitude is not greatness. An object that is great only by the assemblage of many separate objects which are not individually great, is constantly in hazard of being resolved, while we view it, into the diminutives of which it is composed; and the character of greatness cannot survive a moment the charm which seemed to compact them into *one*. Great objects undoubtedly display an augmented grandeur in conjunction; but as everything which depends on combination is subject to be annihilated by dissolution, that greatness alone is permanent, which resides in an object that is simple and indivisible. We can view without emotion a lofty and extensive building of stone; but show us a single rock of the same dimensions, and we gaze with admiration. And if a being were created who should possess physical powers and mental

powers equal to those of the entire human race, he would be a much sublimer object than collective Man. Sometimes, suspended high in contemplation, we look down on the human world as an immense mass of active intelligence and power; but lowering gradually from our elevation, we find that our circle of view becomes less and still less ample; and we begin to perceive too the lines of division that traverse the scene in all directions, and dissect it into the perplexity and littleness of countries, states, and families. Descending still, we descry a separating space round each individual; and deserted now by all the buoyancy of fancy, the mind at last falls down into one of these interstices, to look round with disgust on the small separate parts of this great whole, and murmur, "Where is the grandeur of Man?" We observe one person has feeble intellects; the next has mean dispositions; a third is a petty composition of whims and humours; another the slave of ignorance or prejudice; the next a trifler; and that other stained with the black of infamy; and so onward to an indefinite number. Yet happily, we are sometimes relieved from this dissatisfaction of individual scrutiny, by the appearance of an object which powerfully arrests our attention, and quickly converts it into admiration: an object at once great and indivisible. A character stands before us of colossal stature, who presents the lineaments and the powers of man in magnitude,—a magnitude which conceals a numerous crowd of mankind undistinguished behind him. His aspect declares that he knows he belongs to himself, and that he possesses himself; while the rest seem only to belong as appendages to the situation. He brings from the Creator a commission far more ample than those of other men; and instead of having to learn with tedious application, the nature and circumstances of the world to which he is sent, it appears as if he had been taught them all before he came. Guided by intuitive principles and rules, he enters on the stage of action with the intelligent confidence of one who has accomplished himself by frequenting it long. And whatever still undiscovered means and materials are requisite to his achievements, some kind of internal revelation informs him where they are, though latent in earth, water,

air, or fire; and empowers him quickly to detect them and draw them thence. We observe that for many things he has regards and names different from the common; for some objects generally esteemed great, excite no emotion in him, or none but contempt. He calls suffering, discipline; sacrifices, emolument; and what are usually deemed insuperable obstacles, he names impediments, and casts them out of the way, or vaults over them. His mind seems a focus which concentrates into one ardent beam the languid lights and fires of ten thousand surrounding minds. It might be expected that a few such extraordinary specimens of human nature scattered here and there, would have a wonderful influence on the rest of men. One might expect to see a most fervid emulation kindled wide, indolence and folly discarded, and trifles falling to the ground from all hands. It should seem natural to make the reflection, "Either these are more than men, or we are less." We are disappointed. Let spleen be repressed whenever we survey mankind; for it can represent everything flat and mean. But when benevolence itself makes the survey in the candid light of truth, it must either philosophize heroically, or pathetically lament; for, indeed, the intellectual and moral system is deeply degraded. The imposing proof of it is in this fact, that the grandest human characters make but a very slight impression on many minds, and on very many others none at all. How large a number, for instance, have souls so dark, so hopelessly contracted and dull, so like the clay that encloses them, that they are unable to recognize greatness when displayed before them! Again it is true that "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." Yes, it is a night of mind too thick for these luminaries to irradiate!

Who shall assign the reason? Is it true that the human nature was cast to carry forward the great series of existence, from the inferior to the higher ranks of being, by a gradation which *such* parts were necessary to complete? or is it a solemn decree of fate that the aggregate amount of human dignity *must* not exceed a certain measure, and therefore the splendid intellectual possessions of individuals are of the nature of conquests, made at the expense of part

of their brethren, who must be degraded, to counterbalance these glories? As to the very numerous class who hold the degree of mediocrity, tell them of a man who has performed a noble act of justice or benevolence in spite of the most powerful temptations to the contrary; tell them of another who has suffered tortures and death for virtue's sake—and suffered them without a groan; describe to them heroes who have possessed their souls unappalled when environed by dangers, and horrors, and death, and fire; or talk to them of a sublime genius, that, transcending Milton's powerful agents, who constructed a road from the infernal kingdom to this unfortunate world, has carried a path from this world among the stars, and generally the emotion kindled would be so languid, that the smallest trifle will extinguish it, and turn attention another way. They are content to acknowledge that such characters are much superior to them; just as they would acknowledge that a tree is taller, and then think no more about them. They resemble some lazy and incurious peasants inhabiting the neighbourhood of a high mountain, from the top of which they *have heard* that vast plains, and cities, and ocean, can be seen, but never thought it worth the labour to ascend for such a view.

How pleasing it is to turn from the side of despair to that of hope! This indifference does not reign in every bosom. There are some persons in whose souls the Divinity has mingled a portion of the celestial fire, which, partially oppressed by discordant materials and inauspicious influences, but ever-living, glows, and starts, and sparkles in restless incessant activity. It is interesting to observe the features of their characters and the movements of their minds. The common stream of life's pleasures tastes insipid, and its trifles cannot amuse them; they sigh spontaneously for something nobler. How deep their astonishment, while they contemplate the spirit and state of society, viewed sometimes as one great concourse, tumultuously busy about vanity, and then resolved, according to character, into the different classes of those who try to quench the ethereal spirit in degraded pleasure; of those who sacrifice everything that makes a man preferable to a brazen statue, at Mammon's shrine, and would sell the sun and moon, if in

their power, for money ;—and of those light beings that cluster into mirthful groups, where the entrance of wisdom would be regarded like the introduction of a coffin. The reflections that affect, and the ideas that inspire them most, they find they do not possess in common with the numbers that surround them, and the impossibility of reciprocation, therefore, often insulates them from society. An original fountain of an unknown element springing perpetually within, diffuses such a peculiar quality through the character, and causes such uncommon forms of mental vegetation, that the men appear a kind of foreigners, and their sentiments when disclosed, exotics. They are like trees torn from some remote continent, and drifted to a coast where the natives do not recognize the fruits they carry, and will not taste them. They exult in the consciousness of existence ; but this exultation is continually disturbed by secret intimations that existence has a scope and has treasures from the fulness of which they are precluded by imbecility. In simple phrase, they feel as if they possessed not enough of existence, and would occupy a wider space, and act in greater dimensions, among the ranks of intellectual being.

The prime passion of their souls is for mental liberty. They find themselves restricted and confined within limits against which they most zealously rebel ; and struggle eagerly to break forth on the infinite field of the universe, where they may expatiate without bound, and attain the amplitude and elevation of thought which they always desire. A sublime image of perfection is constantly before them at a distance, though a gloomy cloud may sometimes interpose, to obscure or for a moment hide it. They are like night adventurers, who, having caught a view of a noble mansion, on a difficult eminence, resolve to reach it, while, together with the path that conducts thither, it is alternately revealed by flashes of lightning, and shrouded by the returning darkness. They are grieved almost to madness when they feel their spirits failing in a trial, or find their powers retreating from some noble but arduous attempt. Grand objects in the natural world affect them powerfully, and their images are adopted as a kind of scenery for the interior apartment of the mind, to assist it to form great thoughts. But the interest they feel in great-

ness when it shines in their brother man, is of force to fire their utmost enthusiasm, at the view of exalted heroism, displayed in enterprise, in suffering, or even in retirement, and to melt them into tears at the recital of an act of god-like generosity. For awhile they almost lament that they could not be there, and themselves the actors, though ages have passed since. In the reveries into which they sometimes wander, they are apt to personate some exalted character in some interesting situation; or more frequently to fancy themselves such characters, and create situations of their own: and when they return from visionary roving, to the serious ground of reason, regretting the inertion of the past, they solemnly resolve the most strenuous exertions to surpass, beyond measure, all around them, and their present selves.

My friends! this ardour must not be extinguished; it expresses your kindred with the objects at which it burns. But it cannot die. An attempt to soothe it into lasting quiescence, and to hide in oblivion the affecting views and images that have cherished it, would be vain. It is destined to accompany the man through life, at his choice to mortify or inspire him; for it is imparted by the Divinity as at once an incitement and a power of noble action, which it will invigorate with its mighty energy; but it will haunt and harass an unmanly repose with incurable restlessness. Restless, too, will be the career to which it prompts; but, like that of the sun, it will be the restlessness of continual progression and inextinguishable fire. The passion you feel is the love of greatness, and will aid your approximation to that which it loves.

But what is the greatness of man? The distinction of *great* was undoubtedly first applied to things in the natural world, and afterwards through that pleasing and wonderful analogy between the various departments of existence which makes every object the mirror to a corresponding one, it was applied to the remarkable individuals among men. The distinction naturally belonged to objects of uncommon size or force—to effects which prove themselves the result of mighty causes—and to powers which defy all human control; and it was easily extended to those men in whose predominant qualities a certain resemblance of these in-

stances in nature was discovered. And we cannot long contemplate natural sublimity without a glancing of the mind toward human greatness; nor the greatness of man without viewing in fancy the grand visions of nature. The relation has even taken possession of our language; for brilliant, strong, lofty, profound, firm, and twenty similar words, are the epithets which we use, and *must* use, in describing great characters. We may be permitted a slight deviation, within the scope of this analogy, to notice several of the grand objects in the natural world. For instance, we behold a lofty mountain, which has been seen by so many eyes of shepherds, labourers, and fancy's musing children, that will see it no more. While we view the towering majesty and unchangeable sedateness of its cliffs and sides, and the venerable gloom of forty centuries impressed on its brow, imparting a deeper solemnity to the sky, which sometimes darkens the summit with its clouds and thunders, the expression of our feelings is—How sublime! We have taken our stand near a great cataract; the thundering dash, the impetuous rebound, the furious turbulence, and the murky vapour—oh, what a spectacle! sometimes, while we have gazed, the noise and mass of waters, seemed to increase every moment, threatening to involve and annihilate us. We could fancy we heard preternatural sounds—the voice of death—through the roar. It seemed as if some hideous breach had taken place of the regular order of the system, and the element were rushing from its natural state into strange combustion, as the commencement of ruin. It gives a most striking representation of omnipotent vengeance pouring on enormous guilt. We wonder almost that the stream could change the calmness with which it flowed a little while before into such dreadful tumult, and that from such dreadful tumult it could subside into calmness again.

Perhaps we have seen the sea reposing in calmness. Its ample extent and glassy smoothness seeming almost to rival the sky expanded above it; its depth to us unknown; the thought that we stand near a gulf, capable in one hour of extinguishing all human life—and the thought that this vast body, now so peaceful, can move, can act with a force quite equal to its magnitude—inspire a sublime sentiment. Per-

haps we have seen it in tempest, moving with a host of mountains to assault the eternal barrier which confines its power. If there were in reality spirits of the deep, it might suit them well to ride on these ridges, or howl in this raging foam. We have often seen the fury of little beings; but how insignificant in comparison of what we now behold, the world in a rage! Indeed, we could almost imagine that the great world is informed with a soul, and that these commotions express the agitation of its passions. Undoubtedly to mariners, hazarded far off in the midst of such a scene, the sublimity is lost in the danger. Horror is the sentiment with which they survey the vast flood, rolling in hideous steepes, and gulfs, and surges; while at a distance, on the gloomy limit of the view, Despair is seen to stand, summoning forward still new billows without end. But, to a spectator on the land, the influence which breathes powerfully from the scene, and which conscious danger would darken into horror, is illuminated into awful sublimity, by the perfect security of his situation.

But the sun far transcends all these objects, and yet mingles no terror with the emotion of sublimity. His grandeur is expressed in that vivid fluctuation, and that profuse effulgence, which, so superior to the faintness of a merely reflective luminary, are the signs of an original, inexhaustible fire. He has the aspect of a potentate, ambitious in universal empire of nothing but the power of universal beneficence; and a stranger to the character of our part of the creation would think that must be a pure and happy world which is blest with so grand a radiance! what a pleasure to see him rise—but partially at first, as with a modest delay, till the smile which his appearance kindles over the world invites him to come forward. A certain demure coldness which a little while before gave every object a coy and solitary air, shutting up even the beauties of every flower from our sight, is changed by his full appearance into a kind of social gaiety, and all things, animate and inanimate, seem to rejoice with us and around us. We view him climbing the clouds that sometimes appear on the horizon in the form of mountains, which he seems to set on fire as he climbs. In his course through the sky, he is sometimes seen shaded with clouds, as if passing under the umbrage of a great forest, and some-

times in the clear expanse, like a vast fountain of the element of which *minds* are made. From morning till evening he has the dominion of all that is grand and beautiful over the face of nature, and seems at once to make it his own, and to make it ours. His glories are augmented in his decline, as he passes down the sky amid a wilderness of beautiful clouds, the incense of the world, collected to honour him as he retires; till at last he seems to descend into a calm sea with amber shores—leaving, however, above the horizon a mellow lustre, soft and sweet, as the memory of a departed friend. How important and dignified should that course of action be, which is lighted by such a lamp! How magnificent that system which required so great a luminary—and to what a stupendous elevation will that thought rise, which must vault over such an orb of glory, in its way to contemplate a Being still infinitely greater!

When the night is come, we may look up to the sublime tranquillity of the heavens, where the stars are seen, like nightly fires of so many companies of spirits, pursuing their inquiries over the superior realms. We know not how far the reign of disorder extends, but the stars appear to be beyond its limits; and, shining from their remote stations, give us information that the universe is wide enough for us to prosecute the experiment of existence, through thousands of stages, perhaps in far happier climes than this. Science is the rival of imagination here, and by teaching that these stars are suns, has given a new interest to the anticipation of eternity, which can supply such inexhaustible materials of intelligence and wonder. Yet these stars seem to confess that there must be still sublimer regions for the reception of spirits refined beyond the intercourse of all material lights; and even leave us to imagine that the whole material universe itself is only a place where beings are appointed to originate, and to be educated through successive scenes, till passing over its utmost bounds into the immensity beyond, they there at length find themselves in the immediate presence of the Divinity.

EXTRACTS FROM MR. FOSTER'S JOURNAL.

Many of these passages will serve to illustrate the biography; as they record expressions of personal feeling, incidents, and conversational remarks, relating to the period through which the narrative in this chapter extends.

41. I aspire to be an intellectual painter, and I review Nature's scenery so often, to possess myself of colours.

54. I wish a character as decisive as that of a lion or a tiger, and an impetus towards the important objects of my choice as forcible as theirs towards prey and hostility;—wish to have an extensive atmosphere of consciousness; a soul which can mingle with every element in every form; which, like an Æolian harp, arrests even the vagrant winds, and makes them music.

78. No man can gain my respect for his judgment who begins by contemning mine.

120. The equanimity which a few persons preserve through the diversities of prosperous and adverse life, reminds me of certain aquatic plants which spread their tops on the surface of the water, and with wonderful elasticity keep the surface still, if the water swells, or if it falls.

123. Adversity! thou thistle of life, thou too art crowned; first with a flower, then with down.

(I conclude these extracts with the following very characteristic specimen of my *early style*.)

127. Oh! how many beauties smile unseen by man! This Elysian vale, this rivulet, this reflection of the sun in millions of sparkling points, these buds, these numberless trees, flowers, colours, and odours—that grove, and that ridge of rocks towering above into the blue sky, would have been the same this hour if I had not been here. Lovely, O Nature! are these thy solitudes!

128. Oh, this all-conscious being!—these sources of endless sentiment springing eternally within!

189. Of all seasons *night* is undoubtedly most favourable to poetry; and above all other times, moon-light summer nights when the moon is "full-orb'd," the sky serene, silvery transient mists arise, a river calmly flows along the gilded vale, reflecting the gentle lunar beams. To give the transporting scene its full effect, the time must be after the busy world is hushed, retired to rest, and sunk in slumber and insensibility; when an awful and profound silence universally reigns; except the murmur of streams, cascades, &c., or the sound of distant torrents, and the notes of nocturnal birds, which would greatly contribute to heighten the scene. To render it completely striking, the position must be an elevation from which the Poet may look down on the scene, and like a superior being, cast a vivid glance over the half-shadowy, half-illuminated prospect; and it is another advantage to be placed in some delightful garden, plantation, or some situation which is *itself* pleasing or noble. The mind, at such a season, and in such a situation, feels a most wonderful influence. A vivifying energy animates and elevates the soul. The sentiment of awful grandeur, inspired by the solemn stillness and silence of the night, and by a boundless view of the superior regions and celestial worlds, transcends all description. The imagination is peculiarly vigorous, luminous, and sublime; and then, if ever, our conceptions will be affecting and grand. Some measure of the same effect is produced by fine representations (paintings) of night scenes.*

205. A man of genius may sometimes suffer a miserable sterility; but at other times he will feel himself the magician of thought. Luminous ideas will dart from the intellectual firmament, just as if the stars were falling around him; sometimes he must think by mental moon-light, but sometimes his ideas reflect the solar splendours.

207. Casual thoughts are sometimes of great value. One of these may prove the key to open for us a yet unknown apartment in the palace of Truth, or a yet unex-

* "End of the extracts from juvenile papers, which will be seen no more. These slight passages are preserved to tell *how* I thought, felt, and wrote, before and about the age of twenty, (August, 1796.)"—*Note by Mr. Foster.*

plored tract in the Paradise of sentiment that environs it.

208. I justly denominated a certain preacher, "An old spoke in the systematic wheel which has been turning round in the same place, time immemorial."

209. When the majestic form of Truth approaches, it is easier for a disingenuous mind to start aside into a thicket, till she has past, and then re-appearing, say, "It was not Truth,"—than to meet her, and bow, and obey.

210. When we withdraw from human intercourse into solitude, we are more peculiarly committed in the presence of the Divinity. Yet some men retire into solitude to devise or perpetrate crimes. This is like a man going to meet and brave a lion in his own gloomy desert, in the very precincts of his dread abode.

212. Time is the greatest of tyrants. As we go on towards age, he *taxes* our health, our limbs, our faculties, our strength, and our features.

213. Youth is not like a new garment, which we can keep fresh and fair by wearing sparingly. Youth, while we have it, we *must* wear daily, and it *will* fast wear away.

214. The retrospect on youth is too often like looking back on what was a fair and promising country; but is now desolated by an overwhelming torrent, from which we have just escaped.

215. Or it is like visiting the grave of a friend whom we had injured, and are precluded by his death from the possibility of making him an atonement.

218. I am not *observing*, I am only seeing; for the beam of my eye is not charged with *thought*.

234. Collect the circumstances and appearances of *Morning*, in the fine season of the year. Activity and loquacity of birds and tame fowl. *Men* have their revels and carols in the evening,—these animals in the morning. The rising Sun enlightening first the summit of a solemn distant mountain. His effulgence passing obliquely over the dewy grass, and turning the diffused humidity into—sentiment, vitality! The little eminences casting shades; light stealing in long dashes between these shades, yet seeming to mingle softly with them. Sun seeming to light fires in the

windows of an opposite village on an eminence. Birds lightly flitting; insects playing their mingled dances in the soft air; shining appearance of the cattle, their lowing. The influence is so soft and strong, that it gives an interesting expression even to the walls; a ridge of barren hills; a mass of stones; or a distant road.

235. Characters formed in the routine of a court, like pebbles in a brook, are rounded into a smooth uniformity, in which the points and angles of virtuous singularity are lost.

237. Minds of sentiment and fancy have a conscious but unapparent intercourse with all surrounding objects and beings.

239. Morning in summer is soft without melancholy, and brilliant without glare.

262. Sweet bird! it is a tender and entrancing note, as if breathed by the angel of love; rather the infinite Spirit of love inspires thy bosom, and thou art right while thou singest to raise those innocent little eyes to heaven!

263. Large masses of black cloud, following one another like a train of giants, in sullen silence, answering the azure smiles of heaven that gleam between, with a Vulcanian frown.

264. Why was the Jewish dispensation so strange, so exterior, so inadequate? Why? Would that the end of the world were come to explain the proceedings of Providence during its continuance! But I perceive multitudes around me, who know nothing of these doubts and wonderings.

267. I have seen a man, a *religious* man, press his foot down repeatedly on a small ant-hill, while a great number of the poor animals have been busy on it. I never did such a thing, never. Oh Providence! how many poor insects of thine are exposed to be trodden to death in each path: are not *all* beings within thy care?

274. How many of these minds are there to whom scarcely any good *can* be done? They have no excitability. You are attempting to kindle a fire of stones. You must leave them as you find them, in permanent mediocrity or below. You waste your time if you do not employ it on materials which you can actually modify, while such can be

found. I find that most people are made only for the common uses of life.

275. What a total and independent distinctness each creature asserts from all others. A solitary dog crosses this field; his volition and his action are all his own. He is at this moment independent of all beings but the Creator.

276. What a vast and luxuriant variety appears in the growth of even a common hedge-row in spring; and what a mortifying inferiority, in point of vigour and rapidity, in the growth of mind! Give me a vernal mind—an intellectual vegetation—rich, various, strong, and free from every appearance of formality.

278. I do not long for this powerful excitation as an instrument of vain-glory. It is not a thing which, ambition out of the way, would give me no disturbance. No: it is essential to my enjoyment. It is the native impulse of my soul, and it *must* be gratified, or I shall be either extremely degraded, or extremely unhappy; for I am unhappy in as far as I do not feel myself advancing toward true greatness. I feel myself like a large and powerful engine which has not sufficient water or fire to put it completely in motion.

279. Perhaps you may think that vanity betrays me into a flattering estimate of my capacity;—and perhaps it does; but after having speculated on myself so long, I doubt whether speculation will now be able to detect the fallacy. It must be left to experiment.

280. Here I am now, in health, in a field near C——, musing on plans for futurity. What a question it is, “How—when—where—shall I die?”

285. (To the Deity.) Give me all that is necessary to make me, in the greatest practicable degree, happy and useful. I feel myself so remote from thee, thou grand Centre, and so torpid! It is as if those qualities were extinct in my soul which could make it susceptible of thy divine attraction. But oh! thine energy can reach me even here. Attract me, thou Great Being, within the sphere of thy glorious light; attract me within the view of thy throne; attract me into the full emanation of thy mercies: attract me within the sphere of thy sacred Spirit's most potent influences.

I thank thee for the promise and the prospect of an

endless life; I hope to enjoy it amid the "eternal splendours" of thy presence, O Jehovah! I thank thee for this introductory stage, so remarkably separated by that thick-shaded frontier of Death, which I see yonder, from the amplitude of existence. But oh! how shall I occupy the space of this stage, so as most *absolutely* to achieve its capital purpose,—so as to take possession of what, in Heaven's judgment, is its *utmost value*. Oh do thou seize my existence at its present point, and henceforward guide and model it thyself!—Images of excellence, of happiness, of real greatness, often appear to me, and look at me with an aspect inexpressibly ardent and emphatic. Monitors. why do you accuse me? whither would you lead me? Yes, I will follow them, and try what is that scene to which they invite me. Oh my Father! give me thy strength; inspire, conduct, and crown, one of the unworthiest of all thy sons!

286. My life has been a stream spread into listless diffusion, but ere long it must assume a defined channel, and a quickened motion. I wait to see the valley through which it is to flow;—will it be gentle, or rugged and tremendous?

291. I have been reading some of Milton's amazing descriptions of spirits; of their manner of life, their powers, their boundless liberty, and the scenes which they inhabit or traverse; and my wonted enthusiasm kindled high. I almost wished for Death; and wondered with great admiration what that life, and what those strange regions really are, into which Death will turn the spirit free! I cannot wonder, and I can easily pardon, that this intense and sublime curiosity has sometimes demolished the corporeal prison, by flinging it from a precipice, or into the sea.—Milton's description of Uriel and the sun, revived the idea which I have before indulged as an imagination of sublime luxury, of committing myself to the liquid element (supposing some part of the sun a liquid fire) of rising on its swells, flashing amidst its surges, darting upwards a thousand leagues on the spiry point of a flame, and then falling again fearless into the fervent ocean. O! what is it to be dead; what is it to shoot into the expansion, and kindle into the ardours of eternity; what is it to associate with resplendent Angels!

292. This soul either shall govern this body, or shall quit it.

293. How much I regret to see so generally abandoned to the weeds of vanity that fertile and vigorous space of life, in which *might be planted* the oaks and fruit-trees of enlightened principle and virtuous habit, which, growing up, would yield to old age an enjoyment, a glory, and a shade!

297. I hold myself a sacrifice, a victim, consecrated and offered up on the great altar of the Kingdom of Christ, as one of the human fruits of his kingdom, offered by him, the great High Priest, to the God of all.

300. All pleasure must be *bought* at the price of pain: the difference between false pleasure and true is just this—for the *true*, the price is paid *before* you enjoy it—for the *false*, *after* you enjoy it.

301. *Ego*. There is a want of *continuity* in your social character. You seem broken into fragments. *H*. Well, I sparkle in fragments. *Ego*. But how much better to shine *whole* like a mirror.

302. Infidels assume, in subjects which from their magnitude necessarily stretch away into mystery, to pronounce whatever can, or cannot be. They seem to say, "We stand on an eminence sufficient to command a vision of all things; *therefore*, whatever we cannot see does not exist."

303. (*Power of bad habit*.) I know from experience that habit can, in direct opposition to *every* conviction of the mind, and but little aided by the elements of temptation, (such as present pleasure, &c.), induce a repetition of the most unworthy actions. The mind is weak where it has once given way. It is long before a principle *restored* can become as firm as one that has never been moved. It is as in the case of a *mound* of a reservoir; if this mound has in one place been broken, whatever care has been taken to make the repaired part as strong as possible, the probability is that if it give way again, it will be *in that place*.

304. (Spoken of a remarkable instance of moral insensibility in the approach of death.) "It is an occultation of mind which nothing but death can illuminate."

307. One has sometime continued in a foolish company, for the sake of maintaining a virtuous hostility in favour of wisdom; as the Jordan is said to force a current quite through the Dead Sea.

308. There is not on earth a more capricious, accom-

modating, or abused thing than CONSCIENCE. It would be very possible to exhibit a curious classification of consciences in genera and species. What copious matter for speculation among the varieties of—lawyer's conscience—cleric conscience—lay conscience—lord's conscience—peasant's conscience—hermit's conscience—tradesman's conscience—philosopher's conscience—Christian's conscience—conscience of reason—conscience of faith—healthy man's conscience—sick man's conscience—ingenious conscience—simple conscience, &c., &c., &c., &c.

309. (Suggested by that passage, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, *striving against sin*."")

There was once an age, when it had been most unfortunate to be a bad man; the good ones were so formidably active and courageous. There were a class of men whose profession was martial benevolence. They lived but for the annihilation of wrongs; to defend innocence; to dwell in tempests that goodness might dwell in peace; to deliver the oppressed and captives, and to dash the tyrant down. Woe then to the castles of proud wickedness, to magicians, robbers, giants, dragons; for the wandering heroes vowed their destruction. *This famous age is gone!* But in every age it has been deemed honourable to wage war against the mischievous things and mischievous beings that have infested the earth. "Gallant and heroic world," we are inclined to exclaim, while we contemplate the mighty resistance made to invading armies, elements, or plagues; or the spirited persecution that has incessantly been carried on against robbers, pirates, monsters, serpents, and wild beasts. Yes, tigers, wolves, hyænas, have been pursued to death. The avenging spirit has hunted the timid thief, and even condescended to crush each poor reptile that has been deemed offensive. But—"The world of fools!" we cry, while we consider that SIN, the hideous parent of all evils, and for ever multiplying her brood of monsters over the world, is quietly, or even *complacently*, allowed here to inhabit and to ravage. Where are the heroes "who resist unto blood, *striving against sin*?" Should we weep or laugh at the foolishness of mankind, childishy spending their indignation and force against petty evils, and maintaining a friendly peace with the fell and mighty principle

of Destruction? It is just as if men of professed courage, employed to go and find and destroy a tiger or a crocodile that has spread alarm or havoc, on being asked at their return, "Have you done the deed?" should reply, "We have not indeed destroyed the tiger or crocodile, but yet we have acted heroically; we have achieved something great; we have killed a wasp." Or like men engaged to exterminate a den of murderers, who being asked at their return, "Have you accomplished the vengeance?" should say, "We have not destroyed any of the murderers, we did not deem it worth while to attempt it; but, *we have lamed one of their dogs.*"

311. (Said of a narrow-minded religionist.) Mr. T. sees religion not as a *sphere*, but as a *line*; and it is the identical line in which *he* is moving. He is like an African Buffalo—sees right forward, but nothing on the right hand or the left. He would not perceive a legion of angels or of devils at the distance of ten yards, on the one side or the other.

312. (Spoken in defence of the theory which assigns *Utility* as the foundation of all moral principles, and justifies, on some extraordinary occasions, the violation of *specific* moral rules, in order to preserve this *general* object inviolate.)

Behold, on that eminence, the temple of Utility,—let us approach and enter. "I see no open, regular road thither." "True, on *this* side there *is* no regular approach; but we *cannot* gain the other side, and there is a most urgent *reason* for us to come up to the holy edifice. What then? let us *open* for ourselves a way; let us cut through the tangled *fence*; let us sacrifice a beautiful shrub, or even a fruit-tree, to clear ourselves a path, rather than lose for ever an inestimable advantage."

"But granting your principle to be abstractly just, there is this serious objection. The right application of it in cases of real life will depend on delicate conscience and enlightened calculation. It is needless to remark how few of mankind are thus qualified." "It is very true, and whoever may assume occasional dispensation from the *literal* prescriptions of moral law, it *belongs* exclusively to the men of refined, disinterested virtue and clear thought,—the very

men who, beyond all others, will be anxiously cautious in using the licence, and will regret the necessity of using it at all. Illustrate by a parallel case. You know two ways to a certain town at a considerable distance; the one is what you call '*the king's high road*'—it is broad, plain, and obvious; no man can lose his way; but this road is rather circuitous, and makes the walk long. The other way is shorter, but it is a very slight, almost unknown track; it passes through the intricacies of a solitary forest, and by some very dangerous spots. Two persons inquire of you the way to this town. The first is a child. You instantly direct him to go the plain great road, without so much as intimating that there *is* any other or shorter way. The other person is a man; a man of sense, with 'his eyes about him;' you say to him, 'I commonly direct travellers to keep the great road, as the most certain and safe, though tedious; but I think *such a man as you* might venture a shorter path. Observe me carefully; having walked such a distance along the side of the hill yonder, you must turn to the right, just by an immensely large oak; then wind through the thick shade, by a path you will perceive, if you observe attentively, till you come suddenly to the edge of a great precipice; pass carefully along the edge of it till you descend into a glen; there you will observe an old wooden bridge across a deep water, a little below a cataract, the sound of which will seem to make the bridge tremble as you pass; but it trembles because it is crazy; be careful, therefore, to step softly. You must then pass by the ruins of an abbey, and advance forward over a tract of rough ground till you come,' &c., &c., &c., &c. Thus in morals I mean to assert, that in *some rare instances* the path of duty may lie in a more direct line to its grand object, than by the letter of specific laws; but that perhaps only the eminently conscientious and intelligent few are competent to judge *when* this exception takes place, and how to dispose of it properly. 'This is a curious kind of *prerogative* in morals in favour of your *illuminés*.' I cannot help it. I know that my principle, like every other grand principle, may be perverted to a fatal consequence, yet I cannot relinquish it; for if it should ever happen (and the case *has* happened) that the *letter* of a moral law, owing to some extraordinary concur-

rence of circumstances, should stand in *evident* opposition to that grand *utility*, for the promotion of which all moral rules were appointed by the supreme Governor, it cannot be a question *which* ought to be sacrificed."

313. "Their courtship was carried on in poetry." Alas! many an enamoured pair have courted in poetry, and after marriage, *lived in prose*.

314. I know no mortification so severe as that which accompanies the evinced inefficacy, in one's own conduct, of a virtuous conviction so decisive that it can receive no additional cogency from the resources of either the judgment or the heart.

315. We have such a habitual persuasion of the general depravity of human nature, that in falling among strangers we always *reckon on* their being irreligious, till we discover some specific indication of the contrary.

319. After considering the effect which has been produced by the Iliad of Homer, I am compelled to regard it with the same sentiment as I should a knife of beautiful workmanship, which had been the instrument used in *murdering an innocent family*. Recollect as one instance, its influence on Alexander, and, through him, on the world.

320. Polished steel will not shine in the dark; no more can *Reason*, however refined, shine efficaciously, but as it reflects the light of divine truth—shed from heaven.

321. We are, as to the grand system and series of God's government, like a man who, confined in a dark room, should observe, through a chink of the wall, some large animal passing by;—he sees but an extremely narrow stripe of the object at once as it moves by, and is utterly unable to form an idea of the size, proportions, or shape of it.

323. How dangerous to defer those momentous reformations which conscience is solemnly preaching to the heart! If they are neglected, the difficulty and indisposition are increasing every month. The mind is receding, degree after degree, from the warm and hopeful zone, till, at last, it will enter the *arctic* circle, and become fixed in relentless and eternal ice!

323.* I have sometimes thought, if the *Sun* were an *intelligence*, he would be horribly incensed at the world he is

appointed to enlighten; such a tale of ages, exhibiting a tiresome repetition of stupidity, follies, and crimes.

324. "Nothing new under the sun." I compare life to a little wilderness, surrounded by a high dead wall. Within this space we muse and walk in quest of the new and the happy, forgetting the insuperable limit, till, with surprise, we find ourselves stopped by the *dead wall*; we turn away, and muse and walk again, till on another side, we find ourselves close against *the dead wall*. Whichever way we turn—still the same.

326. Exquisitely curious appearance of the moonshine on the rippled surface of a broad river (Thames), like an infinite multitude of little fiery gems moving and sparkling through endless confusion; or like brilliant insects sporting, all intermingled, and never tired or reposing, the most vivid frisks. At a great distance the appearance is lost in an indistinct, diffused light; but they are there as busy as they are here. How busy activity can go on in the other regions of the earth, or another part of the town, without knowing or caring whether it is so *here* or not.

328. Regret that interesting ideas and feelings are the *comets* of the mind; they transit off. *Qu.* What mode of making them *fixed stars*, and thus the mind a firmament always resplendent?

330. Argument from *miracles* for the truth of the Christian *doctrines*. Surely it is fair to believe that those who received from heaven superhuman power, received likewise superhuman wisdom. Having rung the *great bell of the Universe*, the sermon to follow must be extraordinary.

331. I stoutly maintained in a company lately, that the English are the most *arbarous* people in the world. I cited a number of prominent facts; among others, that *bull-baiting* was lately defended and sanctioned, in the grand talisman of the national humanity and virtue—the *Parliament*.

338. How many kinds of fools are there, and how many of each kind? I am just told some one has got the ticket which *His Majesty* dropped in his box in the Theatre on the night he was *missed* by Hadfield, and deems it an invaluable possession,—would not take any money for it.

349. Met a number of men one after another. My urbanity was not up to the point of saying, "Good morn-

ing," till I had passed the *last* of them, who had nothing to attract civility more than the others, except his being the last. If a Frenchman and an Englishman were shown a dozen persons, and under the necessity of choosing one of them to talk an hour with, the Frenchman would choose the first in the row, and the Englishman the last.

351. Poor horse! to draw both your load and your *driver*: so it is;—those that have power to impose burdens, have power and will to impose their vile selves in addition. En passant, reflection here;—how different is this one fact to me and to the horse I this moment looked at: I think—the horse feels; I am turning a sentence, the horse pants in suffering: how languid a feeling is that of sympathy! Nothing mortifies me more than that defect of the vitality of sympathy, with which I am for ever compelled to tax myself.

353. (Little bird in a tree.) Bird, 'tis pity such a delicious note should be silenced by winter, death, and above all by annihilation. I do not, and I cannot, believe that all these little spirits of melody are but the *smuff* of the grand *taper of life*, the mere vapour of existence to vanish for ever.

356. Many images are called up in the mind by moral analogies which were not recognized before, i. e. were not noticed with a distinct thought.

364. If a stranger on the road is anxious to have you for a companion, it is commonly a proof that his company is not worth having.

370. How much of a traveller's attention is commonly engrossed by the works of art, houses, carriages, &c.; and how little is directed to the endless varieties of nature.

371. An old stump of an oak, with a few young shoots on its almost bare top. *Analogy*: Youthful follies growing on old age.

372. A still pool amid a most barren heath, shining splendidly in the morning sunshine. *Analogy*: Talents accompanied with moral barrenness, i. e. indolence, or depravity.

378. Managing by a sound system of *principles*, or by *expedients*;—*beams* make one think of the firm durability of a work, *props* of its dissolution.

379. No scheme so mortifying as that which employs

large means to accomplish little ends. Let your system be magnitude of end with the utmost economy of means.*
Lost labour intolerable.

382. I want to extract and absorb into my soul the sublime mysticism that pervades all nature, but I cannot. I look on all the vast scene as I should on a column sculptured with ancient hieroglyphics, saying, "There is significance there," and despairing to read. At every turn it is as if I met a ghost of solemn, mysterious, and undefinable aspect; but while I attempt to arrest it, to ask it the veiled secrets of the world, it vanishes. The world is to me what a beautiful deaf and dumb woman would be; I can *see* the fair features, but there is not language to send forth and impart to me the element of soul.

383. Fancy *makes* vitality where it does not find it; to it all things are *alive*. In this unfrequented walk, even the dry leaf that is stirred by a slight breath of air across the path, seems, for a moment, to have its little life, and its tiny purpose.

384. There is an argumentative way, not only of discussing to ascertain truth, but also of enforcing acknowledged and familiar truth.—Baxter—Law.

385. Let a man compare with each other, and also bring to the abstract scale, the sentiment which follows the performance of a kind action and that which follows a vindictive triumph; still more if the good was done in return for evil. How much pleasure then will that man ensure,—yes, what a vast share of it! whose deliberate system it is, *that his every action and speech shall be beneficent!*

* "It (the Bible Society) possesses every characteristic of the work of God, in which the simplest means are made to produce the greatest effects; where there is the utmost economy in the contrivance, and the greatest splendour and magnificence in the design. The imbecility of man appears in the littleness of his ends, which he accomplishes for the most part by complicated and laborious operations. Omnipotence, on the contrary, places opulence in the end and parsimony in the means."—HALL, *Works*, vol. iv., p. 383.

"Cultivation is the economy of force. Science teaches us the simplest means of obtaining the *greatest* effect with the *smallest* expenditure of power, and with given means to produce a maximum of force. The unprofitable exertion of power, the waste of force . . . is characteristic of the savage state, or of the want of true civilization."—LIEBIG'S *Familiar Letters on Chemistry*, London, 1851, p. 462.

392. Most remarkable appearance of a field full of oaks cut down, disbarked and embrowned by time. Gave me forcibly the idea of an assemblage of giant monsters; or of the skeletons of a giant's field of battle.

393. Some one spoke of altering and modernizing the style of one of the most eloquent writers of the last century. [F.] "You cannot alter his diction; it is not an artificial fold which may be taken off, and another superinduced on the mass of his thoughts. His language is identical with his thought; the thought *lives* through every article of it. If you cut, you *wound*. His diction is not the *clothing* of his sentiments,—it is the *skin*; and to alter the language would be to *flay* the sentiments *alive*."

394. Of all the kinds of writing and discourse, that appears to me incomparably the best, which is distinguished by grand masses, and prominent bulks; which stand out in magnitude from the tame ground work, and impel the mind by a succession of *separate strong impulses*, rather than a continuity of equable sentiment. One has read and heard very sensible discourses, which resembled a plain, handsome brick wall,—all looks very well, 'tis regularly built, high, &c., but 'tis all alike; it is flat; you go on and on, and notice no one part more than another; each individual brick is nothing, and you pass along, and soon forget utterly the wall itself. Give me, on the contrary, a style of writing and discourse that shall resemble a wall that has the striking irregularity of pilasters, pictures, niches, and statues.

395. Mr. T.'s discourse is good, but attenuated: he has a clue of thread of gold in his hand, and he unwinds for you ell after ell; but give me the man who will throw the clue at me at once, and let me unwind it; and then show in his hand another ready to follow.

396. There is a great deficiency of what may be called *conclusive* writing and speaking. How seldom we feel at the end of the paragraph or discourse that something is *settled and done*. It lets our habit of thinking and feeling *just be as it was*. It rather carries on a *parallel to the line* of the mind, at a peaceful distance, than fires down a *tangent* to smite across it. We are not compelled to say with ourselves emphatically, "Yes, it is so! it must be so; that is decided to all eternity!" The subject in question is still

left afloat, and you find in your mind no new impulse to action, and no clearer view of the end at which your action should aim. I want the speaker or writer ever and anon, as he ends a series of paragraphs, to *settle* some point irrevocably with a *vigorous knock* of persuasive decision, like an auctioneer, who with a rap of his hammer says, "There! that's yours; I've done with it; now for the next."

397. "I know as well as you the folly of wandering for ever among the *abstractions* of philosophy, while truth's business and ours is with the real world. I am endeavouring to learn truth from observations on facts. I am trying to 'take off the *hide* of the actual world, but it must be *curried* by philosophy, you will grant me, to be made fit for all the useful purposes."

402. How little of our knowledge of mankind is derived from *intentional* accurate observation. Most of it has, unsought, found its way into the mind from the continual presentations of the objects to our unthinking view. It is a knowledge of *sensation* more than of *reflection*. Such knowledge is vague and superficial. There is no *science* of human nature in it. It is rather a habit of feeling than an act of intellect. It perceives obvious, palpable peculiarities; but nice distinctions, delicate shades, are invisible to it. A philosopher will study all men with as accurate observation as he would some individual on whose dispositions, opinions, or whims he believed his fate to depend.

405. Lanthorn in a dark night—interesting appearance of the tenebrious glimmer it throws on the nearest shrubs and trees; and of the thick darkness that seems to *lurk* and frown close behind.

407. It would be interesting to look back over all the past of one's life, to see how many, and *count* how many vivid little points of recollection still twinkle through its shade. My mind just now caught sight of one of these stars of retrospect, at the distance of sixteen or seventeen years. It was my once (in a summer evening, the sun not set) lying on my back on the grass, and holding a small earthen vessel, out of which I had just sipped my evening milk, between my face and the sky, in such a way that a few of the soft rays glanced on my eyes, and seemed to

form a little living circle of lustre, round an eyelet hole, through which I fancied visions of entrancing beauty.

408. Burke's sentences are pointed at the end,—instinct with pungent sense to the last syllable. They are like a charioteer's whip, which not only has a long and effective lash, but *cracks* and inflicts a still smarter sensation at the *end*. They are like some serpents of which I have heard it vulgarly said, their life is the fiercest in the tail.

410. I have often noticed the process in my mind, when, in the outset of a journey or day, I have set myself to *observe* whatever should fall within my sphere. For some time at first I can do no more than take an account of bare facts; as, there is a house; there a man; there a tree; such a speech uttered; such an incident happens, &c., &c. After some time, however, a larger enginery begins to work; I feel more than a simple perception of objects; they become environed with an atmosphere, and shed forth an emanation. They come accompanied with trains of images, moral analogies, and a wide diffused, vitalized, and indefinable kind of sentimentalism. Generally, if one can compel the mind to the labour of the first part of the process, the interesting sequel will soon follow. After one has passed a few hours in this element of revelation, which presents this old world like a new vision all around, one is ashamed of so many hundred walks and days which have been vacant of observation and reflection.

413. (Said to a lady on the moral merits of a theatre.) "If some night there should go forth from God a potent energy, which, passing along the surface of the world like the *simoon* should blast and destroy every institution and structure which, *in the whole account*, does evil, would, or would not, the theatre be in ruins in the morning? *Ans.* In ruins, certainly."

416. (Of an extremely depraved child.) "I never saw so much *essence of Devil* put in so small a vessel."

417. How large a portion of the material that books are made of, is destitute of any *peculiar* distinction. "It has," as Pope said of women, just "no character at all." An accumulation of sentences and pages of vulgar truisms and candlelight sense, which any one was competent to write, and which no one is interested in reading, or cares to

remember, or could remember if he cared. This is the *common* of literature—of space wide enough, of indifferent production, and open to all. The pages of some authors, on the contrary, give one the idea of enclosed gardens and orchards, and one says, "*Ha! that is the man's own.*"

418. I have often contended that attachments between friends and lovers cannot be secured strong, and perpetually augmenting, except by the intervention of some interest which is not *personal*, but which is common to them both, and towards which their attention and passions are directed with still more animation than even towards each other. If the whole attention is to be directed, and the whole sentimentalism of the heart concentrated on each other; if it is to be an unvaried, "*I towards you, and you towards me,*" as if each were to the other, not an ally or companion joined to pursue happiness, but the very end and object—happiness itself; if it is the *circumstance* of reciprocation itself, and not *what* is reciprocated, that is to supply perennial interest to affection; if it is to be mind still reflecting back the gaze of mind, and reflecting it again, cherub towards cherub, as on the ark, and no *luminary or glory between them to supply beams* and warmth to both,—I foresee that the hope will disappoint, the plan will fail. Affection, on these terms, will be reduced to the condition of a famishing animal's stomach, the opposite sides of which, for want of pabulum introduced, meet and digest, and consume each other. Attachment must burn in *oxygen*, or it will go out; and, by oxygen, I mean a mutual admiration and pursuit of virtue, improvement, utility, the pleasures of taste, or some other interesting concern, which shall be the element of their commerce, and make them love each other not only *for* each other, but as devotees to some third object which, they both adore. The affections of the soul will feel a dissatisfaction and a recoil if, as they go forth, they are entirely intercepted and stopped by any object that is not *ideal*; they wish rather to be like rays of light glancing on the side of an object, and then sloping and passing away; they wish the power of elongation, through a series of interesting points, on towards infinity.

Reading lately some of Newton's *Letters to his wife*, I wondered at the phenomenon of so warm and long pro-

tracted an affection, or rather passion, with so little of this oxygen; no literature, no romancings of fancy, no excursions over the creation, no moral discussions, no character-criticism, no plans of improvement, no analysing of each other's qualities and defects; no, all mere *I and you—you and I*. A measure of piety indeed there is; but without any variety or *specific thought*.

Human society is a vast circle of beings on a plain, in the midst of which stands the shrine of goodness and happiness, inviting all to approach; now the attached pairs in this circle should not be continually looking on each other, but should turn their faces very often toward this central object, and as they advance, they will, like radii from the circumference to the centre, continually become closer to each other, as they approximate to their mutual and ultimate object.

420. "I still less and less like the wealthy part of your circle (H.'s). It appears to me, that the main body of principle is merged. As to religion, sir, they are in a religious diving-bell; religion is not circumambient, but a little is conveyed down into the worldly depth, where they breathe by a sort of artificial inlet—a tube."

421. Melancholy musings in the direction of Fatalism. One seems to see all *how it is to be*, as to one's friends, as to *one's self*. Unfortunate habits have been formed, and threaten to reign till death. Instruction, truth, just reach the heart to fall inefficacious. One augurs the sequel from the first part; as in a common-place novel, one can see from the first chapter what is to happen forward to the close.

422. The importance and *necessity* of a *Ruling passion**—i. e. some grand object, the view of which kindles all the ardour the soul is capable of, to attain or accomplish it—possibility of *creating* a Ruling Passion asserted.

423. A reflection that never occurs without the bitterest pain; one longs for affection—for an object to love devotedly,—for an interesting friend to associate and commune with—meanwhile THE DEITY offers his friendship and communion, and—is refused, or forgotten!!! There are, too, the sages of all ages—there is Moses, Daniel, Elijah; and you complain of *want of society*!!!

* Essay on Decision of Character; *Letter* iii.

424. The whole system of life goes on this principle of *selling* one's self: then the question of estimates should for ever recur—"my time for *this*?"—"and *this*?"

425. Idea partly serious, partly comic, of formally judging myself, sentencing, and then hanging myself; the thousand faults that still attach to me might almost tempt to this.

427. (Ruling Passion again.) Necessity of pursuing some grand purpose of existence as a sportsman does a fox—at all hazards, over hill and dale and brook; through wood and brake, and everything and everywhere, unless it go into the earth, or into the clouds;—and *here*, too, our moral chase shall follow; for the *body* shall enter the dust—the *soul* ascend!

428. (Fragment of a letter, never sent.) My dear Sir, I consider each of us, as having nearly described a *semi-circle* of life since I saw you last, and it is with great pleasure I anticipate the *completing of the circle* in meeting you again in little more than a week. It would be amusing for each to exhibit *memoirs* of the incidents and of the course. I was lately considering what would be the effect of a law obliging each person to present, at appointed periods, a history of his life during the interval, to a kind of *morality Court*, authorized to investigate, censure, and reward. I was considering how, in that case, I should dispose of, and where I should conceal a considerable quantity of the materials which ought to be exhibited in *my* history, or, if I *could* not conceal them, in what specious language it would be possible to describe them, so as to obtain the tolerance of this high and venerable court. I concluded that the best expedient would be, *to get myself appointed one of the judges.*

What a delightful thing it would be, to be able honestly at all times to approve one's self entirely! I have sometimes passed through a series of deep and wondering reflection, beginning from myself, and extending over and around that vast mass of human existence I have been observing; when at last the thought, that an invisible and omniscient Power is all the while taking all these things that I look at, or hear, or do, into his estimate, expanded as it were in the heavens, an ample counterpart to this

world of active character below ;—when this thought has lightened from the sky, it has struck as a thought of alarm ; it has even sometimes appeared with the aspect of a *new* thought, announcing a truth not known, or not felt before. I have finished the reflections by determining that, as there really *is* an estimate above, co-extending with the advance of life below, a wise man will, to the end of time, associate the thought of that estimate with every act of that life. I hope henceforth to live incessantly under the influence of this thought ; and then I should neither care to be a judge in the court I have supposed, nor be at all afraid to present myself at its bar.

431. Told that Fawcett concluded a charity sermon by saying, “ When I look at the objects of this charity, I feel I cannot say too much ; when I look at this assembly, I feel I cannot say too little.” On hearing this I exclaimed, “ Excellent ! artful ! eloquent ! ” but question, *Is* that artful, or will it be effectual, the policy of which is so instantaneously seen through ?

434. (In the vestry of Battersea meeting, during evening service.) Most emphatic feeling of my individuality—my insulated existence—except that close and interminable connexion, from the very necessity of existence, with the Deity. To the continent of Human Nature, I am a small *island* near its coast ; to the Divine Existence, I am a small *peninsula*.

435. How impotent often is the pain of guilt as a stimulant to amendment. Instance myself just now, in regard to letters I ought to have written long ago.

436. My efforts to enter into possession of the vast world of moral and metaphysical truth, are like those of a mouse attempting to gnaw through the door of a granary.

439. Threw (in a journey between Bristol and Cheddar) some large stones down a deep old pit, with apparently a great depth of water at the bottom, a dark sullen glimmer of which the eye occasionally caught. I felt almost a shuddering sensation at the gloomy and furious sound of the water, in the impetuous commotion caused by these stones. Strongly imagined how it would be for *myself* to fall down.

440. Entered a large cavern, sloping down very steep,

where a great number of human bones had been found. Saw a considerable quantity of them myself. This cavern was itself but lately found. It was broken into by digging away the rock. No conjecture how or when these bones came there.

445. From what principle in human nature is it that if a child is inclined to cry—I do not mean a very young child—one of the readiest methods of prevention is to affect to whimper yourself?

447. Mr. H. and I looked a considerable time with much curiosity and gratification in one of the irregularly cut pendant glasses of a lustre, in which we saw the same beautiful display of coloured tints and brilliancies as in the prism, only more irregular and variegated. It was not the glass toy we for a moment thought about, but the strange and beautiful vision, and those laws of nature that could produce it. A young lady present, of polished and expensive education, large fortune, and fond of personal and furniture ornaments, expressed sincerely her wonder at our childish fancy in finding anything to please us in such an object; and said she would reserve the first thing of this kind she should meet with, if no other children claimed it, for one of us. I did not fail to observe the circumstance, as supplying another instance, in addition to the ten thousand one has met with before, of persons who *never saw* the world around them, who are strangers to all its witcheries of beauty, and who, at the same time, indulge a ridiculous passion for the petty productions of art subservient vanity.

448. "How gloomy that range of lamps looks (at some distance along the border of a common)—how dark it is all around them." Yes, like the lights that are disclosed to us from the other world, which simply tell us, that there, in the solemn distance, where they burn encircled with darkness, that world is, but shed no light on the region.

449. Interesting conversation with Mr. S. on education. Astonishment and grief at the folly, especially in times like the present, of those parents who totally forget, in the formation of their children's habits, to inspire that vigorous independence which acknowledges the smallest possible number of wants, and so avoids or triumphs over the

negation of a thousand indulgences, by always having been taught and accustomed to do without them. "How many things," said Socrates, "I do not want."

450. How precious a thing is youthful *energy*; if only it could be preserved entirely *inglobed* as it were within the bosom of the young adventurer, till he can come and offer it forth a sacred emanation in yonder temple of truth and virtue; but, alas! all along as he goes toward it, he advances through an avenue, formed by a long line of tempters and demons on each side, all prompt to touch him with their conductors, and draw this divine electric element with which he is charged, away!

451. *Children's Ball*,—a detestable vanity. Mamma solicitously busy for several weeks previously, with all the assistance too of miliners and *tasteful* friends, with lengthened dissertations, for the sole purpose of equipping two or three children to appear in one of these miserable exhibitions. The whole business seems a contrivance, expressly intended to concentrate to a focus of preternatural heat and stimulus every vanity and frivolity of the time, in order to blast for ever the simplicity of the little souls, and kindle their vain propensities into a thousand times the force that mere nature could ever have supplied.

452. I am sorry not to have gained the knowledge which thirty or forty shillings would have purchased in London. At the expense of so much spent in charity, a person might have visited just once eight or ten of those sad retirements in darkness in dark alleys, where, in garrets and cellars, thousands of wretched families are dying of famine and disease. It would be most painful, however, to see these miseries without the power to supply any effectual relief. At the very same time you may see a succession which seems to have no end, of splendid mansions, equipages, liveries; you may scent the effluvia of preparing feasts; you may hear of fortunes, levees, preferments, pensions, corporation dinners, royal hunts, &c., &c., numerous beyond the devil's own arithmetic to calculate. This whole view of society might be called *the Devil's play-bill*; for surely this world might be deemed a vast theatre, in which he, as manager, conducts the endless, horrible drama of laughing and suffering, while the diabolical satyrs of power, wealth,

and pride, are dancing round their dying victims ; a spectacle and an amusement for which the infernals will pay him liberal thanks. It would be a most interesting undertaking for a man of large fortune to explore all the recesses of want and misery in the Metropolis alone, in order to publish an ample view of facts, accompanied by that eloquence of pity and indignation of which the scenes that would be disclosed to such a man would be the unrivalled school. What a tragedy he would unfold, beyond all that poetry ever dreamed !

453. Sesostris, Semiramis, Ninus, &c. These mighty names remain now only as small points, emerging a little above that ocean under which all their actions are buried. We can just descry, by the dying glimmer of ancient history, that that ocean is of *blood* !

454. In books one takes up occasionally, one finds a consolation for the impossibility of reading many books, by seeing how many might have been spared. How little that is new or striking in the great department of religion, morals, and sentiment. Might not all the sermon books, for instance, in the English language, after the exception of three or four dozen volumes, be committed to the fire without any cause of regret ?

455. Few have been sufficiently sensible of the importance of that economy in reading which selects, *almost exclusively*, the *very first* order of books. Why should a man, except for some *special* reason, read a very inferior book, at the very time that he might be reading one of the highest order ?

456. Desideratum. A comprehensive estimate of the real effect produced by *preaching*.

459. Very advantageous exercise to incite attentive observation and sharpen the discriminating faculty, to compel one's self to sketch the character of each person one knows.

460. What *given force* beyond, for instance, what *my* mind can infuse into argument, illustration, and persuasion, would be requisite to make religious sentiments impinge so powerfully on the mind of S—, as to *stick fast* on it ; or convictions respecting the subject of amusements on the minds of B— and W— ? There is a degree somewhere

in the scale, I suppose, that would; but probably that degree would be a strain of eloquence impossible to less than an angel.

464. Struck, in two instances, with the immense importance, to a man of sense, of obtaining a *conversational predominance*, in order to be of any use in any company exceeding the smallest number. Example, *W. Friend*.

465. An opponent maintained that I ought to contribute to the execution of every law of the state I live in, even though I disapprove some of those laws in my private judgment. Denied. How can such obligation come? It is confessed, in the first instance, that in general my own judgment and conscience form the supreme law. Then, if *one* man assumes to interfere with the dictates of my own mind, and enjoins me a course of action opposite to my convictions, I spurn the assumption. But so I do likewise if *two* men thus dictate in opposition to my moral sense. If *three* men do this, I do still the same. If five hundred, if a thousand, if ten thousand, I still do the same, and deem that duty binds me to do so. I ask these, What is this thing you call a *state*? what is that moral authority assumed by it over my conscience, if it merely consists of these same men whom individually, and in the accumulation of an indefinite number, I have already refused to obey?

468. Zealously asserted the rational soul, and future existence of brutes. Their souls made of the worse end of the celestial manufacture of mind, which was not quite fine enough to make into men. Various strong facts cited to prove that they, at least some of them, possess what we strictly mean by mind, reason, &c.

471. All political institutions will probably, from whatever cause, tend to become worse by time. If a system were now formed that should meet all the philosopher's and the philanthropist's wishes, it would still have the same *tendency*; only I do hope that henceforward to the end of time, men's minds will be intensely awake to the nature and operation of their institutions; so that after a new era shall commence, governments shall not slide into depravity without being keenly watched, nor be watched without the sense and spirit to arrest their deterioration.

472. It is a most amazing thing that young people never

consider they shall grow old. I would, to young women especially, renew the monition of this anticipation every hour of every day. I wish we could make all the cryers, watchmen, ballad-singers, and even parrots, repeat to them continually, "You will be an old woman—you will—" "and you."—Then, if they have left themselves to depend, almost entirely, as most of them do, on exterior and casual recommendations, they will be wretchedly neglected. No beaux will then draw a chair close to them, and sweetly simper, and whisper that the bowers of Paradise did not afford so delightful a place.

474. "*Paid the debt of nature.*" No; it is not paying a debt—it is rather like bringing a note to a Bank to obtain solid gold in exchange for it. In this case you bring this cumbrous body, which is nothing worth, and which you could not wish to retain long; you lay it down, and receive for it from the eternal treasures—liberty, victory, knowledge, rapture!

476. Mr. — keeps a long look, that aims to appear significant, fixed on you after he has said a thing; as a sportsman, after he has let off his piece, preserves for some time the same posture and attentive look to see whether he has brought down the game.

477. Against *amusements*, defended on the plea of necessary *relaxation*. I maintain that *excitement* is *excitability* too. An animated, affecting interest, supplies to the mind more than it consumes. The further a man advances in the ardour that belongs to a noble employment and object, the more mightily he lives. Other men will perhaps advance with him to a certain point, and there they stop—he goes on; now the *ratio* of his progress and his animation is incomparably greater on that far-advanced ground beyond where they left him, than within an equal space in the earlier part of the course. The mind inspired with this enthusiasm asserts its grandeur. It expands toward eternity, anticipative of its destiny. It lives, as Alonzo says, not by the vulgar calculation of months and years, but along the progression of sublime attainment, and amid the flames of an ardour which whirls it like a comet towards the sun.

Would you be a stranger to this energy of soul—or, feel-

ing it, would you prostitute it to seek a poor factitious interest in systematic trifling?

479. Theology and philosophy have been entirely separated by most divines, and some have attempted an awkward association of them; they joined them without producing unity or union. All the emanations of both ought to converge to one focus; and thence, combined and identified, dart forward, a living beam of light, *in infinitum*.

485. The very intelligent Mr. G. reasoned against the Calvinistic doctrine of original depravity,—evidently, I perceived, from his feeling respecting that of eternal punishments. Believing this last, he was anxious, as a kind of palliation of its severity, to make man as *accountable* a being as possible, by making his vice entirely optional, and so making all his depravity his crime.

487. In a conversation one of the speakers expressed his wish (and illustrated his idea by a very ingenious comparison, of a West-India merchant importing a small number of yams sometimes as a slight item of his cargo), a wish that the friends of religion, sinking the importance of the little nominal *specific* distinctions of Baptist, Presbyterian, Independent, &c., which have caused so much demarcation and warfare, should transfer the emphasis on the grand *generic* term and character—CHRISTIAN, and cease to cite or allude to, or meet one another, but under this distinction. *Ego*. "Sir, this cannot be done while there is so little of the vital element of religion in the world; because *it* is so shallow, these inconsiderable points stand so prominent above the surface, and occasion obstruction and mischief; when the powerful spring-tide of piety and mind shall rise, these points will be swallowed up and disappear."

488. In conversation at W—'s, had a splendid revel of imagination among the stars, caused by the mention of Herschel's telescope, and some astronomical facts asserted by him. The images, like Lee's poetry, were, from a basis of excellence, flung away into extravagance. But it is a striking reflection, that when the wild dream of imagination is past, the *thing is still real*; there *is* a sun; there *are* stars and systems; innumerable worlds, on which the soberest depositions of science far transcend all the visions that fancy can open to enthusiasm!

490. What is that sentiment approaching to a sad pleasure, which a mind of profound reflection sometimes feels in a far inward incommunicable grief, though the fixed expectation of calamity, or even guilt, were its cause?

491. How thoughtless often is a moralist's or a preacher's enumeration of what a firm or pious mind may *bear* with patience, or even complacency; as disease, pain, reduction of fortune, loss of friends, calumny, &c., for he can easily add *words*;—alas! how oppressive is the steady *anticipation* only of any one of these evils!

493. One object of life should be to accumulate a great number of grand questions to be asked and resolved in eternity. We now ask the sage, the genius, the philosopher, the divine,—none can tell; but we will open our series to *other respondents*,—we will ask angels,—God.

494. How every hostile feeling becomes mitigated into something like kindness, when its object, perhaps lately proud, assuming, unjust, is now seen oppressed into dejection by calamity. The most cruel wild beast, or more cruel man, if seen languishing in death, and raising toward us a feeble and supplicating look, would certainly move our pity. How is this? perhaps the character is not even supposed to be really changed amid the suffering that *modifies* its expression. Do we unconsciously take anything like a *tender feeling*, even for *self*, as a proof of some little goodness, or possibility of goodness? Is it for those beings alone that we feel nothing, who discover a hard and stupid indifference to self, and everything besides? Perhaps any sentient being, the worst existent or possible, *might be* in a situation to move and to justify our sympathy. What then shall we think of that theology which represents the men, whom God has made most like himself, as exulting for ever and ever in the most dreadful sufferings of the larger part of those who have been their fellow inhabitants of this world?

495. One should think that a tender friendship might become more intimate and entire the older the parties grew; as two trees planted near each other, the higher they grow, and the more widely they spread,—intermingle more completely their branches and their foliage. (N.B. This

was absolutely my *own* conception; but I found the very same idea lately in Ramsay's Gentle Shepherd.*)

496. On the question of the equality of men and women, a lady, in answer to my very serious reasoning to prove that, if naturally equal, nothing can bring the women to an actual equality, but the same course of vigorous mental exertion which professional men are obliged to go through, said, "Well, we shall be content to occupy a lower ground of intellectual character and attainment." I replied, "You may then be consoled; we from that more elevated region shall sometimes, in the intervals of our *grand* interests and adventures, look down complacently and converse with you, till the emphasis of some momentous subject return, and call us to transact *with our equals*. It will be ours to inhabit the paradise on the high summit of that mount which you will never climb; we shall eat habitually the fruit of the trees of knowledge, but we will kindly sometimes throw you a few apples down the declivity."

497. I am going to wade the stream of misery, and I see an inaccessible bank before me on the other side; *where* I may find it accessible I do not yet know!

498. Strong imagination of sitting or lying awake in a solitary room, and a ghost entering and sitting down in the room opposite me. What an intense feeling it would be while I reciprocated the fixed silent glare.

500. (Fragment of a letter, never sent, to a young woman whose character was not of the fairest kind.) "There is one question, my friend, to which you cannot be indifferent, Are you happy? I contemplate many mournful scenes; I converse with many gloomy ideas; I behold many miserable persons; and the impression of such objects makes me

But we'll grow auld together, an' ne'er find
The loss o' youth, when love grows on the mind.
See yon twa elms that grow up side by side—
Suppose them some years syne bridegroom an' bride;
Nearer an' nearer ilka year they've preat,
Till wide their spreading branches are increas'd,
An' in their mixture now are fully blest.
This shields the other frae the eastlin blast;
That in return defends it frae the wast.

GENTLE SHEPHERD.—Act I., Scene 2.

sometimes ask, 'Is any one truly happy? Is there such a blest mortal in the world? Show me that person.' Tell me now, do I see that person when I see *you*? Do I indeed? Let me be assured of that, and I would see you often. I would look at you with fixed attention. 'Happiness!' I would say to myself, and continue to regard you, 'What are its signs? Does it sparkle through her eyes? Does it play in her smiles? Does it breathe music in her words?' Rather perhaps I ought to ask, 'What kind of sentiments does she express? What kind of actions does she perform?' Yes, I would observe you with more patience than an astronomer observes the moon. With sincere curiosity I would inquire of you, *the art of being happy*; for the happy are generous, one should think. The person who would not communicate such an art, certainly does not possess it. I would call you 'the Happy Girl,' you would scarcely need any other name; this would be a sufficient distinction, for who could claim it besides? But do you know yourself by this name? It is time to recollect that perhaps the person I am fancying to myself is not really *you*; perhaps you are *not* happy. That were melancholy. *You* unhappy! From what cause? Are you *guilty*? Oh! if you have blighted the sweet lily of innocence with folly or crime, you have then some reason to be sad. But, are not you pure? Have you not always avoided, with watchful aversion, every thing that could stain your heart or your character? Cannot you reflect on each season of your life, and on each situation in which the Witness of all things has seen you, without a blush? Can you not? Are not the records of memory so fair, that you could with pleasure unfold them to a virtuous friend? Is there any part on which Conscience has fixed a *black seal*? And are not your *present* principles, feelings, and designs, such as you might with honour avow?"

501. I doubt if S. is not *too innocent* to become sublimely excellent; her heart is purity and kindness; her recollections are complacent; her wishes and intentions are all good. In such a mind conscience becomes effeminate for want of hard exercise. She is exempted from those revulsions of the heart, that remorse, those self-indignant regrets, those impetuous convictions, which sometimes

assist to scourge the mind away from its stationary habits into such a region of daring and arduous virtue, as it would never have reached, nor even thought of, but for this mighty impulse of pain. Witness Albany in Cecilia. Vehement emotion, mortifying contrast, shuddering alarm, stinging the mind into an exertion of power it was unconscious of before, and urge it on with restless velocity toward the attainment of that moral eminence, short of which it would equally scorn and *dread* to repose. We fly from pain or terror more eagerly than we pursue good;—but if both these causes aid our advance!

A young eagle perhaps would never have quitted the warm luxury of its nest, and towered into the sky, if the parent had not pushed it, or the tempest flung it, off, and thus compelled it to fly by the danger of perishing. Is it not too possible that S. may repose complacently in the innocent softness of her nest, and die without ever having unfolded the wing of sublime adventure. At sight of such a death one would weep with tenderness, not glow with admiration; it is a charming woman that falls, not a radiant angel that rises. (I feel this is cumbrous and obscure, but there is truth in what I mean, that the consciousness of no ill precludes, in some degree, the conception of eminent good; it feels too safe, it produces a habit far too quiescent; the noblest purposes can never be either conceived or executed but in a state of ardent excitement, and the painful emotions of conscience are among the most powerful causes of such excitement.)

503. What an astonishing mass of *pabulum* is consumed to sustain an individual human being! How much nourishment I have consumed by eating and drinking; how much air by breathing; how much of the element of affection my *heart* has claimed, and has sometimes lived in luxury, and sometimes starved! Above all! what an infinite sum of those instructions which are to feed the moral and intellectual man, have I consumed, and how poor the consequence! What a despicable, dwarfish growth I exhibit to myself and to God at this hour!

Yes, how much it takes, in this last respect, to grow how little! Millions of valuable thoughts I suppose have passed through my mind. How often my conscience has

admonished me! How many thousands of pious resolutions! How all nature has preached to me! How day and night, and solitude and the social scenes, and books and the bible, the gravity of sermons and the flippancy of fools, life and death, the ancient world and the modern, sea and land, and the omnipresent God! have all concurred to instruct me! and behold the miserable result of all!! I wonder if the measure of effect be a ten thousandth part of the bulk, to call it so, of this vast combination of causes. How far is this strange proportion between moral effects and their causes necessary in *simple* nature (analogically with the proportion between cause and consequence in *physical pabulum*), and how far is it the indication and the consequence of nature being *depraved*? However this may be, the enormous fact of the inefficacy of truth shades with melancholy darkness, to my view, all the hopes for myself and for others, of any grand improvements in this world!

505. Curious process of kindling the passion,—fear in one's own breast, by the voluntary imagination of approaching ghosts, of the sound of murders, &c., &c. I sometimes do this to escape from apathy.

506. —'s memory is nothing but a row of hooks to hang up grudges on.

507. One of the strongest characteristics of Genius is — *the power of lighting its own fire.*

508. A man of ability, for the chief of his reading, should select such works as he feels beyond his own power to have produced. What can other books do for him but waste his time and augment his vanity?

511. What a number of little captious feelings, mortifications, and even whims, are incident to a devoted affection. My friendship for — is attended with a painful watchfulness and susceptibility; my heart suffers a feverish alternation of cold and warmth; physically and literally sometimes a chill sensation pervades my bosom, and moves me at once to be irritated and weep. . . . *Qu.* How far a continual state of feeling like this would be propitious to happiness and to virtue? Yet how is a son of fancy and passion to content himself with that mere *good-liking*, which is exempt from all these pains, because it leaves the most

Elysian powers of the heart to sleep unmolested to the end of time? It seems tolerably evident that such *over-vitalized* feelings are unfit for this world, and yet without them there can be none of that sublimity and ecstasy of the affections, which we deem so congenial to the felicities of a superior world.

512. I asserted the strength of Burke's mind equal to that of Johnson's; Johnson's strength is more conspicuous because it is *barer*. A very accomplished lady said, 'Johnson's sense seems to me much clearer, much more *entirely disclosed*.' "Madam, it is the difference of two walks in a pleasure-ground, both equally good, and broad, and extended; but the one lies before you plain and distinct, because it is not beset with the flowers and lilacs which infringe and embower the other. I am inclined to prefer the latter."

514. (Fragment of a letter, never sent, to a friend.) "In a lonely large apartment I write by a glimmering taper, too feeble to dispel the spectres which imagination descries, flitting or hovering in the twilight of the remote corners. The winds howl without, and at intervals I hear a distant bell, tolling amidst antiquity and graves. The place and the hour might suit well for an appointed interview with a ghost, coming to reveal, though obscurely, 'the secrets of the world unknown.' I almost fancy I perceive his approach; a certain trembling consciousness seems to breathe through the air; an indistinct sullen sound, like the tread of unseen footsteps, passes along the ground, and seems to come toward me; I fearfully look up—and behold!!—Thus abruptly last night I stopped, not without reason surely."

515. Some ladies, to whose conversation I had been listening, were to take away an epic poem to read. "Why should *you* read an epic poem?" I said to myself; "you might as well save yourselves the trouble." How often I have been struck at observing, that *no effect at all* is produced, by the noblest works of genius, on the *habits* of thought, sentiment, and talk, of the generality of readers their mental tone becomes no deeper, no mellow; they are not equal to a fiddle, which improves by being repeatedly played upon. I should not expect one in twenty, of

even educated readers, so much as to *recollect* one singularly sublime, and by far the noblest part, of the poem in question : so little emotion does any thing awake, even in the moment of reading ; if it did, they would not forget it so soon.

517. How is it possible the conversation of *that pair* can be interesting ? Surely the great principle of continued interest in such a connexion cannot be to talk always in the style of simple, direct personality, but to introduce *personality* into *subject* ; to talk of topics so as to *involve each other's feelings*, without perpetually talking *directly at each other*.

520. Most interesting idea, that of renovated being. I am not the person I was, the past is nothing to me ; the past *I* is not the present *I* ; I have transited into another person ; I am my own phoenix.

524. Indisposition of mankind to think ; souls make the world a vast dormitory. The heaven-appointed destiny under which they are placed, seems to protect them from reflection ; there is an *opium sky* stretched over all the world, which continually rains soporifics.

525. Long-maintained question in conversation, how far powerful imagination does always, or necessarily, imply powerful judgment too. Instances, Burns, Bloomfield, &c.

526. Interesting disquisition on the value of continuous passion, habitual emotion, and whether this can be created, and how long a person so feeling could live. Buonaparte cannot live long.

527. Stood in a solitary grove, just opposite to a large cascade, on which I looked with long and fixed attention. Most interesting to observe the movements of my own mind, particularly as to the ideas which come from distant (unseen) objects and scenes. The images of several favourite persons, but particularly *one*, came round me with an aspect inconceivably delicious. Tried to ascertain how much of this charm was added to these images by the influence of the beautiful scene where they appeared to me.

528. Proud stroke of description of —'s manners when in the most advantageous form. "He is neither vulgar nor genteel, nor any compound of these *two kinds of vulgarity*. He has the manners of *no class*, but something of a quite different order. His manners are a part of *his soul*

like the style of a writer of genius. His manners belong to the *individual*. He makes you think neither of clown nor gentleman,—but of MAN.”

532. Infinite and incalculable caprices of feeling. A quarter of an hour since how romantic, how enchanted with the favourite idea, how anticipative of pleasure from an expected meeting! I have advanced within two hundred yards of the place: well, while I have been looking at some trees and a pool of water, the current of sentiment is changed, and I feel as if I could wish to slink away into deep and eternal solitude.

533. (Right traces, meant to have been pursued much further, of a remarkable female of my acquaintance. . . .) She has the pride of sense, yet throws the *onus* of sensible social intercourse on *you*; not taking any sort of responsibility on herself as to the value, animation, or interesting style of conversation; she is silent. Yet if *you* did thus, would describe you to a third person as intolerably dull.

Her judgment makes a difference as to the mental qualities of those she associates with, which her *affections* do not make. She does not become at all *attached* to what she respects. . . . She has a much greater tendency to feel and express disgust than liking; contempt than admiration. She rarely expresses, or seems to feel, admiration of any thing or character, but on a thousand occasions discovers her aversions.

She has a fixed dislike to what may be called affectionatenesses in friendly intercourse; repels the tendency, in a person who is partial to her, toward any personalities of affection; devoutly worships Indifference, and is proud of the religion.

If she speaks on a subject you have suggested, or even in reply to your observation, she directs her discourse to a third person, not to you; as if she would say, I choose to take some notice of the *subject*, but not the smallest notice of *you*.”

534. Importance of having a *system of exercising* the affections,—friendship,—marriage,—philanthropy,—theopathy. If not in some of these ways exercised, affections become stunted, soured, self-directed.—Old maids.

536. (Amazing caprices of feeling, vide No. 532). . .

An hour since, anxious to bind this person as a dearest friend to my heart for ever; now relapsed into the solitaire feeling; must be a *monad*. A trivial circumstance brought up the feeling that thus changed the current of the heart. That feeling was not of either altered opinions or diminished affection, but a self-originating, sad, and *retiring* sentiment which seemed to say, "No heart will receive me, no heart needs me."

537. Have I so much originality as I suppose myself to have? The question rises from the reflection that very few original *plans of action* or enterprise ever occurred to my thoughts.

(Two or three memoranda, transcribed from a paper written at Chichester.)

Important points ascertained:—

(1.) In my present circumstances taken as they are, setting all the past aside, *some one thing is absolutely the best thing I can design or do.*

(2.) My present sphere and course of action is most certainly *not* the best that can be. In proof of this assertion several conclusive reasons can be alleged.

(3.) It strictly follows, that to change this sphere and this course, is decisively a part of my duty.

(4.) And inasmuch as life is valuable, and utility *is* its value, it is clear that the case is urgent, and that I am required to attempt this change with zeal and with speed.

(5.) *The greatest good* is to be my sovereign principle and object of action.

(6.) Incidental principle. To make the plans I adopt for the improvement of my own mind, contribute equally, if possible, to the improvement of others, by writing, letters, —and otherwise.)

(7.) *Is not this world a proper scene for a benevolent and ardent mind?* There are bodies to heal, minds to enlighten and reform, social institutions to change, children to educate. *In all this is there nothing that I can do ?!!*

(8.) One of these two things, viz., congenial society, and a sphere of urgency and action, seems absolutely necessary to save my energies from torpor or extinction. If I could gain both!

(9.) Oh, how I reprobate this indecision as to what character I will assume, and what designs I will attempt!

(10.) I deem myself a man of capacity beyond the common; my plan of action ought therefore to include as little as possible of that which common capacity can perform as well as mine; and as much as possible of what requires, and will educe, this superiority of ability which I attribute to myself.

(11.) I want to extend, as it were, and augment my being and its interests; there is *one* mean of doing this, which, &c.

538. Love of fame. Is not that character which to comprehensive and ardent virtue adds a carelessness of human opinion, the most sublime of all! suggested by the recollection of a character in romance. Littleness in this particular of Dr. Johnson, Burke, &c.

Who is he that he will preserve a countenance and temper perfectly tranquil and careless, amidst scorn, invidious companions, &c.?

One limitation to the noble indifference to what people think and say of us. Every generous mind will regret those misapprehensions of its conduct, which occasion mortification to the person who misapprehends—as that a person you respect should, through some mistake, believe that you have ridiculed or injured him.

548. (548—569 written during a walk of a few miles alone.) This glaring, steady sunshine gives an indistinct sameness to all objects, very like a frequent state of my mind, distended in a fixed, general, vacant stare, incapable of individualizing. Hughes described it very correctly once, after hearing me perform a mental exercise while my mind was in this state: “All luminous but no light.” It is possible to go on in this case, with a train of diction which may sound well enough, and even look *fine*, while it conveys no definite conceptions.

547. Saw a most beautiful butterfly, which I was half inclined to chase. *Qu.* Which would be the stronger excitement to such pursuit, the curiosity raised by seeing such an object for the first time, or the feeling which, as now, is a relic of the interests and amusements of early youth?

549. The feeling which accompanies the recognition of an

object that is not in itself interesting, but where the interest is in the circumstance of recognition. I have a feeling of this kind in seeing what I believe to be the same butterfly again at a considerable distance from where I saw it before.

551. With what calm carelessness the summit of this great tree seems to look down on me. I would much rather be however that little bird on its uppermost twig than the majestic tree itself.

552. Value of animated existence. I would rather be a fly than a sublime mountain,—than even *Ætna*.

559. Mortified to see a *crow* fly across my road and away. Man here, proud man, is trudging at this slow and toilsome rate, but how much prouder and more mischievous I should be if I could fly. It was requisite for power of one kind to be checked by impotence of another. I cannot fly!

560. Sheep crowding for shade round an old leafless stump. It cannot shade them now. Analogy: a man fallen from his prosperity and power cannot patronize now. None will seek him now but the *simple*.

562. Blackthorn shows its blossoms before its leaves. Analogy: sensibilities developed before reason is sufficiently expanded to protect them.

564. After looking a good while on the glaring side of the view, my eye does not nicely distinguish these modest beauties in the shade. Analogy: a man whose feelings and habits are formed in splendid and fashionable life, has no relish for the charms of retirement, or of secluded, affectionate society.

569. How much one wishes it possible to leave each painful feeling that accompanies one in the rock, or the tree, or the tomb that one passes; but no: tenaciously faithful, it is found to accompany still! I am gone on, past fields, and woods, and towns, and streams, but there is a spectre here still following me!

588. "Well, but this qualification might be attained, *if* a man would exert sufficient application." "Ah, Madam, the field of possibility is so beset round with a hedge of thorny *ifs*."

589. — has one power beyond all you preachers I have yet heard,—a power of massy fragments of originality, like

pieces of rock tumbling suddenly down, and dashing into a gulf of water below.

590. (Touch of description of a young woman in the lower ranks, not cultivated into a girl of sense, yet not so thoughtlessly vacant as the common vulgar.) "She has *notions*."

592. The dictates of genius urging elevated principles, are not admitted or understood by the generality. So I remember a man refusing a shilling quite new from the mint, every line and point of it distinct and brilliant, for "it was an *odd* kind of shilling, not like other shillings," it must therefore be a bad or suspicious one.

595. The "Rights of Man" contains strokes of sarcasms, contempt, &c., but I think not much *malice*; malice is the most copiously generated in a mind conscious of being impotent to achieve its wish;—but T. Paine felt that he was powerful and successful.

596. Query, whether the generality of minds, the common order, could be cultivated into accuracy and discrimination of *general thought*. No; they might be made accurate in a particular department, depending on facts,—accurate mechanics, tradesmen, grammarians, &c.—but not as thinkers on the wide general field of truth and sentiment. "This is very unfortunate." "No, madam, all is appointed by the Deity, and if more geniuses had been needful, they would have been forthcoming."

597. You plead that dancing, &c., are things of pleasant *sensation*. Yes, you are right; it does not reach *sentiment*. The line that divides the regions of sensation and sentiment is a very important one:—is not *dignity* all on the *other side* of this line, i. e. the region of sentiment?

600. Confront improper conduct, not by *retaliation*, but *example*.

602. (Said of a lady who infamously spoilt her son,—a most perverse child.) "She will have her reward; she cultivates a *night-shade*, and is destined to eat its poisoned berries."

605. (Remark on the character of Green.) There is such a predominant habit of deep feeling in his mind, that the smallest touch, a single sentence, will instantly bring his mind and his very voice into that tone. Comparing him to

a musical stringed instrument, I should say that he never needed *tuning*; the strings are perfectly ready at any moment; you have only to touch them and they will sound harmoniously the genuine music of sentiment.

606. A character should retain always the upright vigour of manliness; not let itself be bent and fixed in any specific form. It should be like an upright elastic tree, which bends, accommodating a little to each wind on every side, but never loses its spring and self-dependent vigour.

608. A lady said she remembered a remarkable and romantic hill much more distinctly now, at the distance of a considerable number of years, from the impression made by a thunder storm which happened when she was on the summit of this hill. I observed how advantageous it is to connect, if we could, some striking association with every idea or scene we wish to remember with permanent interest. This is like framing and glazing the mental picture, and will preserve it an indefinite length of time.

609. Astonishing fact, that all that mankind acknowledge the greatest, they care about the least;—as first, on the summit of all greatness, the Deity. 'Tis acknowledged he reigns over all, is present always *here*, prevails in each atom and each star, observes us as an awful Judge, claims infinite regard, is supremely good—what then? why, think nothing at all about him!

There is *Eternity*; you have lived perhaps thirty years; you are by no means entitled to expect so much more life; you at the utmost will very soon, *very* soon die! What follows? *Eternity*! a boundless region; inextinguishable life; myriads of mighty and strange spirits; vision of God; glories, horrors. Well—what then? Why, think nothing at all about it!

There is the great affair—moral and religious improvement. What is the true business of life? To grow wiser, more pious, more benevolent, more ardent, more elevated, in every noble purpose and action, to resemble the Divinity! It is acknowledged; who denies or doubts it? What then? Why, care nothing at all about it! Sacrifice to trifles the energies of the heart, and the short and fleeting time allotted for divine attainments! Such is the actual course of the world. What a thing is mankind!

610. (Feature of the character of one of my friends.) "Vigilant without suspicion, and discriminating without fastidiousness."

611. (Character of one of my acquaintance, whom a friend was describing as melancholy.) "No; her feelings are rather *fretted* than melancholy."

612. Astonishing number of analogies with *moral* truth strike one's imagination in wandering and musing through the scenes of Nature. Or, is analogy a really existing fact, or merely an illusive creation of the mind within itself? Suggested in a moonlight walk, by observing a great rock reflected downward as far as its height upward, in a still piece of water at his foot, and by comparing this deception to that delusive magic of imagination which magnifies into double its proper dimensions of importance an object which is interesting.

613. Sat a little while with a fascinating woman, in a room which looked out on a beautiful rural and vernal scene, while the rays of the setting sun shone in with a mellow softness that cannot be described, after spreading a very peculiar light over the grass, and being partially intercepted by some blooming orchard trees, so as to throw on the walls of this room a most magical picture; every moment moving and changing, and finally melting away. I compared this room in this state, contrasted with an ordinary room in an ordinary state, to the interior of a common mind, contrasted with the interior of a mind of genius. Conversation with my friend on the feelings and value of genius. Shall never forget *this* hour.

614. In the moment of uncontrolled fancy and feeling, one attributes perceptions like one's own to even inanimate objects; for instance, that solitary tree appears to me as if regretting its desolate, individual state.

615. One wonders in how many respects a real resemblance exists through the creation. One may doubt whether, if there be embodied inhabitants in the planets of other suns, or even in the other planets of our own system, they have *forms* any thing like ours. They may be square, orbicular, or of any other form. One analogy (physical analogy,) however, strikes me as prevailing through every part of the universe that sight or science can reach, and that is—*fire*.

The fixed stars are the remotest material existences we know of, and they certainly must be fire, like that which exists in a nearer part of the creation. This striking circumstance of similarity warrants the supposition of many more, in the physical phenomena of the distant parts of the universe—and may not this physical conformity warrant the supposition of a similarity in the *moral* phenomena of the different regions of the creation?

616. Some people's sensibility is a mere bundle of *aversion*s, and you hear them display and parade it, not in recounting the things they are attached to, but in telling you how many things and persons they "*cannot bear*."

618. Mrs. —'s passions are like a little whirlwind—round and round; moving, active, but still *here*; do not carry her *forward*, away, into superior attainment.

619. Amusing idea, of playing a *concert of people*, that is, drawing forth the various passions, prejudices, &c., of a small company of persons, and mixing them, soothing them, exciting them, and, in short, entirely playing all their characters at the will, and by the unnoticed influence of the player.

620. A human being like Edwin (the Minstrel) would be the proper touchstone to bring into the routine of fashionable life, talk, amusements, &c.: what *his* feeling would nauseate is nauseous.

621. Conversational disquisition on novels. "I have often maintained that fiction *may* be much more instructive than real history. I think so still; but viewing the vast rout of novels *as they are*, I do think they do incalculable mischief. I wish we could collect them all together, and make one vast fire of them; I should exult to see the smoke of them ascend like that of Sodom and Gomorrah: the judgment would be as just."

622. One important rule belongs to the composition of a fiction, which I suppose the writers of fiction seldom think of, *viz.*, never to fabricate or introduce a character to whom greater talents or wisdom is attributed than the author himself possesses; if he does, how shall this character be sustained? By what means should my own fictitious personage think or talk better than *myself*? The author may indeed *describe* his hero, and say that his Edward, or his

Henry, or his Francis, is distinguished by genius, acuteness, profundity, and comprehension of intellect, originality and pathos of sentiment, magical fancy, and every thing else; this is all very soon done. But if this Henry, or Edward, or Clement, or whatever else it is, is to talk before us, then, unless the *author himself* has all these high qualities of mind, he cannot, like a ventriloquist, make them speak in the person of his hero. There will thus be a miserable discrepancy between what his hero was at his introduction described to be, and what he *proves himself* to be when he opens his mouth. We may easily imagine, then, how qualified the greatest number of novel writers are for devising thought, speech, and action for heroes, sages, philosophers, geniuses, wits, &c.!!! Yet this is what they all can do!!!

623. (Mention of having read a transcendent dramatic work.) "I never was so fiercely carried off by Pegasus before; the fellow neighed as he ascended."

625. Some one said that women remarked characters more discriminatively than men. I said, "They remark *manners* far more than *characters*. The mental force which might be compressed and pointed into a javelin, to pierce quite through a character, they splinter into little tiny darts to stick all over the features, complexion, attitude, drapery, &c. How often I have entered a room with the embarrassment of feeling that all my motions, gestures, postures, dress, &c., &c., &c., were critically appreciated, and self-complacently condemned; but at the same time with the bold consciousness that the inquisition could reach no further. I have said with myself, 'My *character*, that is the *man*, laughs at you behind this veil; I may be the devil for what you can tell; and you would not perceive neither if I were an angel of light.'"

626. (Said of an exquisitely soft and pensive evening.) "It is as if the soul of Eloisa pervaded all the air."

627. How hopeless is the attempt to anticipate the final fixed state of either one's opinions or sentiments. How they for ever fluctuate to the various influence of changing scenes, social affections, and advancing life. If I should live to the age of sixty, the radical character of my mind and my heart will probably be the same as now, but the possible modifications are infinite! One thing is certain;

that cheerfulness is not among those possibilities, for that would be a radical change. And how impossible is it to give one's own perceptions to those who are coming after one in the course of life! With what a mixture of pity, envy, occasional pride, but, above all, *dissociation*, one regards their unadept fancies, hopes, and notions!

If one deem one's self a superior mind, one knows, of course, that in no length of time many will ever come to the point where *I* now stand. Their walk is along the common road; mine has been through the untrodden vales and hills. I heard several aged persons expressing their high admiration of a book which *I* admired when I was *fifteen*, but when I was twenty admired no more.

630. Shakespeare had perceptions of every kind; he could think *every* way. His mind might be compared to that monster the prophet saw in his vision, which *had eyes all over*.

631. I heard lately an educated lady say she did not admire Shakespeare at all. *I* admired *her*. It has often struck me as curious to observe the entire, unhesitating *self-complacency* with which characters assume to admire and detest, in opposition to the concurrent opinions of all the most enlightened and thinking minds. . . . With all this self-satisfied feeling, the most ignorant, or the most illiberal, hearers of sermons pronounce on the talents, &c., of the preachers.

632. I remember buying some trifle of, I think, a fruit-woman, in Ireland, who held me back the piece of money, and requested me, as it was the first money she had taken that day, to "*spit on it for luck*." I here regret having made no memoranda of the vast number of curious anecdotes, incidents, and odd glimpses of human nature which one has met with in the course of years, and forgotten.

635. Superlative value in connexions of friendship or love, of mutual discrimination. I cannot love a person who does not recognize my *individual* character. It is most gratifying, even at the expense of every fault being clearly perceived, to see that in my friend's mind there is a standard, or scale of degrees, and that he exactly perceives which degree on this scale *I* reach to. What nonsense is sometimes inculcated on married persons, and on children

in regard to their parents, about *being blind to their faults*; at the very time, forsooth, they are to cultivate their reason to the utmost accuracy, and to apply it fully in *all other instances*! as if, too, this duty of blindness depended on the will!

All strenuous moral speculations, all high ideas of perfection, must be pursued at the expense of all human characters around us. The defects of our friends will strike us, whether we will or not, while we study the sublime theory, and strike us the more, the more distinctly we understand the theory and them. They will often *force their aid* on us in the form of *contrast*. This cannot be helped; the truth and the consequent feelings must take their course.

636. *Quantity of existence* may perhaps be a proper phrase for that, the less or more of which causes the less or more of our interest in the individuals around us. The person who gives us most the idea of ample being, interests us the most. Something certainly depends on the *modification* of this being, and something on its comprising *each of the parts* requisite to *completeness*; but still perhaps the most depends on its *quantity*. This is the principle of my attachment to Y. I do not exactly like the *modification*, and there seems a defect of one article or two to *entireness*; but I am gratified by the ample measure. Z. has both the ample quantity of being, and the charming modification, and the entire number of parts; Z. is therefore the most interesting individual I know.

637. (Expression in an evening prayer.) "May we consider each night as the tomb of the departed day, and, seriously leaning over it, read the inscription written by conscience, of its character and exit."

638. (Said on being requested to translate Buchanan's incomparable Latin Ode to May), "It would be like the attempt to paint a sun-setting cloud-scene."

639. A young lady, whose perceptions were often natural and correct without her being able to appreciate them, said to a friend of mine, "I like to walk in the country with you because you are pleased with remarking objects and talking of them. The companions I have been accustomed to would say, when I wished to do this, 'Caroline, take less notice of

the fields and more of the company!!!” This young woman, amidst much puerility, would frequently express, unconscious of their value, feelings so natural and just as to be quite interesting, and sometimes even striking to a philosopher. I compared her to the African, James Albert, who, when come to England and in possession of money, would give to a beggar as it might happen, a penny or a half-guinea, unapprized of the respective value of each.

640. Among married persons of the common size and texture of minds, the grievances they occasion one another are rather feelings of *irritated temper* than of *hurt sentiment*; an important distinction. Of the latter, perhaps, they were never capable, or perhaps have long since worn out the capability. Their pain, therefore, is far less deep and acute than a *sentimental* observer would suppose, or would in the same circumstances, with *their own* feelings, suffer.

641. Some people’s religion is for want of *sense*; if they had this, they would have no religion, for their religion is no more than prejudice—superstition.

642. A man or woman with a stupid or perverse partner, but still hoping to see this partner become all that is desired, is like a man with a wooden leg wishing it might become a vital one, and sometimes for a moment fancying this almost possible.

642.* The presence of a third person gives a more balanced feeling with respect to an individual that interests one too much.

643. Common-place truth is of no use, as it makes no impression; it is no more instruction than *wind is music*. The truth must take a *particular bearing*, as the wind must pass through tubes to be anything worth.

644. Many years are now gone since the conduct and the responsibility of my own education devolved entirely on myself. It is not necessary to review these years in order to estimate the manner in which this momentous charge has been executed. The present state of my mind and character supplies a mortifying excess of proof, that the interesting work has been conducted ill.

645. P. made some most interesting observations on the *moral effect* of the study of natural philosophy, including astronomy. He denied as a general fact, the tendency of

even this last grand science to expand, sublime, or moralize the mind. He had talked with the famous Dr. Herschel. It was of course to suppose, *à priori*, that Herschel's studies would alternately intoxicate him with reverie, almost to delirium, and carry him irresistibly away towards the throne of the divine Majesty. P. questioned him on the subject. Herschel told him that these effects took place in his mind in but a very small degree; much less, probably, than in the mind of a poet without any science at all. Neither a *habit of pious feeling*, nor any peculiar and transcendent *emotions* of piety, were at all the necessary consequence.

646. On observation. The *capabilities* of any sphere of observation are in proportion to the force and number of the observer's faculties, studies, interests. In one given extent of space, or in one walk, one person will be struck by five objects, another by ten, another by a hundred, some by none at all.

Power of mind and refinement of feeling being supposed equal, the number of a person's *interests* and *classes of knowledge* will have a great effect to extend or confine his sphere of observation. Was struck lately in remarking Lunell's superiority over me in this respect. In a given scene or walk, *I* should make original observations be longing to the general laws of taste, to fancy, sentiment, moral reflection, religion; so would he, with great success; but, *in addition*, he would make observations in reference to the arts, to geographical comparison, to historical comparison, to commercial interest, to the artificial laws of elegance, to the existing institutions of society. Every new class of knowledge, then, and every new subject of interest, becomes to an observer a *new sense*, to notice innumerable facts and ideas, and consequently receive endless pleasurable sensations and instructive hints, to which he had been else as insensible as a man asleep. This is like employing at once all the various modes of catching birds, instead of one only. It is another question, whether the mind's observing powers will act less advantageously in any one given direction from being diverted into so many directions.*

* "How little, with all one's attention, one sees in these places com-

647. Have just seen the moon rise, and wish the image to be eternal. I never beheld her in so much character, nor with so much sentiment, all these thirty years that I have lived. Emerging from a dark mountain of clouds, she appeared in a dim sky, which gave a sombre tinge to her most majestic aspect. It seemed an aspect of solemn, retiring severity, which had long forgotten to smile; the aspect of a being which had no sympathies with this world,—of a being totally regardless of notice, and having long since, with a gloomy dignity, resigned the hope of doing any good, yet proceeding with composed, unchangeable, self-determination to fulfil her destiny, and even now looking over the world at its accomplishment. (Happy part of the figure.) Felt it difficult to divest the moon of that personality and consciousness which my imagination had recognized from the first moment. With an effort, alternated the ideas of her being a mere lucid body, and of her being a conscious power, and felt the latter infinitely more interesting, and even more as if it were natural and real. Do not know how I found in the still shades, that dimmed in solemnness the lower part of her orb, the suggestion of immortality, and the wish to be a “disembodied power.” Question to the silent spirits of the night, “What is *your* manner of feeling as you contemplate all these scenes? Are yours all ideas of absolute *science*, or do they swim in visionary fancy?” The apprehension of soon losing the power of *seeing* a world so superabundant of sentiment and soul, is very mournful.*

pared to what would be seen in them by a company of half-a-dozen men, each of whom had his particular taste and art; suppose one a landscape painter, another a florist, another a botanist, another a chemist, another a farmer, another a general, another a land-surveyor; another a complete sentimentalist, a Rousseau; another an ornithologist,” &c.—*Mr. Foster's MS.*

* “May, 1801. A worthy friend gave me this book with a request that I would fill it with my own thoughts, in any form, of essays, sermons, fragments, or sentences, and then return it to him.—I am sensible of the compliment; but cannot be so liberal of the very scanty productions of my mind as to comply with the request. I therefore retain the book as my own, and entirely for my own use. The ominous symptoms in my eyes do not leave me the hope of preserving the power of sight long enough to write it full. I turn from a view of the vernal beauties that are spreading all around me, with sad emotion, to think that probably in a little while all the creation will be to me shrouded in a night which nothing will

648. Made in conversation, but cannot recollect sufficiently to write, a vivid and happy display of what may be called *physiopathy*, a faculty of pervading all Nature with one's *own being*, so as to have a perception, a life, and an agency in all things. A person of such a mind stands and gazes at a tree, for instance, till the object becomes all wonderful, and is transfigured into something visionary and ideal. He is amazed what a tree *is*, how it could, from a little stem which a worm might crop, rise up into that majestic size, and how it could ramify into such multitudinous extent of boughs, twigs, and leaves. Fancy climbs up from its root like ivy, and twines round and round it, and extends to its remotest shoots and trembling foliage. But this is not all; the tree soon becomes to your imagination a *conscious* being, and looks at you, and communes with you; ideas cluster on each branch, meanings emanate from every twig. Its tallness and size look conscious majesty; roaring in the wind, its movements express tremendous emotion. In sunshine or soft showers it carries a gay, a tender, or a pensive character; it frowns in winter on a gloomy day. If you observe a man of this order, though his body be a small thing, invested completely with a little cloth, he expands his being in a grand circle all around him. He feels as if he grew in the grass, and flowers, and groves; as if he stood on yonder distant mountain top, conversing with clouds, or sublimely sporting among their imaged precipices, caverns and ruins. He flows in that river, chafes in its cascades, smiles in the aqueous flowers, frisks in the fishes. He is sympathetic with every bird, and seems to feel the sentiment that prompts the song of each. (This, in one sense, is "inheriting all things.")

650. Lord Chatham in his speeches did not *reason*; he struck, as by intuition, directly on the *results* of reasoning; as a cannon-shot strikes the mark without your seeing its course through the air as it moves towards its object.

651. Readers in general who have an object beyond amusement, yet are not apprised of the most important use of reading, the acquisition of *power*. *Mere knowledge* is irradiate but the *sun of the other world*."—Note by Mr. Foster in a MS. volume.

not power ; and, too, the memory retains but the small part of the knowledge of which a book should be full ; the grand object, then, should be to improve the strength and tone of the mind by a thinking, analysing, discriminating, *manner* of reading.

652. I have observed, that most ladies who have had what is considered as an education, have no idea of an education progressive through life. Having attained a certain measure of accomplishment, knowledge, manners, &c., they consider themselves as *made up*, and so take their station ; they are pictures which, being quite finished, are now put in a frame—a *gilded* one, if possible—and hung up in permanence of beauty ! permanence, that is to say, till Old Time, with his rude and dirty fingers, soil the charming colours.

653. Fine sensibilities are like woodbines, delightful luxuries of beauty to twine round a solid, *upright, stem of understanding* ; but very poor things if, unsustained by strength, they are left to creep along the ground.

654. Fine feelings, without vigour of reason, are in the situation of the extreme feathers of a peacock's tail, dragging in the mud.

655. The sapient saws of *experience* make a very princely ridiculous appearance stuck on heads where they did not *grow*. (Instance in a son of feeble faculty mincing what were evidently some of his father's remarks ; his father is an uncommonly acute observant man.)

656. The *romance* feeling is as necessary to the exquisitely affectionate (in sentimental connexions), as to the impassioned and sublime.

658. How should a mind, capable of any intellectual or moral ambition, feel at the thought of transcendent examples of talent and achievement ? Suggested on awaking at a late hour, and instantly recollecting—"Now Buonaparte has probably been four hours employed this morning in thinking of the arrangements of the greatest empire on earth, and I ——"*

"The regret which would be felt by a man prosecuting some grand scheme of ambition, for the loss of a day or an hour, if it were possible for him to have been betrayed into such a remissness, may justly command our admiration and reproach our indolence, while we reprobate his designs.

665. Some people's religious opinions only a stake driven in the ground ; does not grow,—shoots out no green,—remains just *there*, and just *so*.

667. Contrasts will assist in judging of character. Go directly from the company of a harsh character into that of a tender one ; or the contrary, from the company of a refined character into that of a coarse one : you will not only more forcibly feel, but more discriminately judge, the difference. Like coming from *sub dio* into a room with bad air.

672. Represented strongly to a young lady the importance of a *taste for the sublime*, as a most powerful ally to all moral, all religious, all dignified plans of happiness.

685. I have been once more throwing an eager gaze over the heaven of stars, with the alternate feelings of shrinking into an atom and expanding into an angel—what I but am now ! what I may be hereafter ! I am amazed that so transcendently awful a spectacle should seize attention so seldom, and affect the habit of thought so little. What is the most magnificent page of a heroic poem, compared with such an expanse of glorious images ? It seems the grand portico into that infinity in which the incomprehensible Being resides. Oh, that this soul should have within itself so little of that amplitude and that divine splendour which deify the scene that for ever environs it !

And I often wonder, when I hear the expressions of astonishment at the incessant exertions of that one man of the present age, who performs more within a given space of time than any other inhabitant of the earth, that the thought of this stupendous though depraved example does not sting, and impel, and mortify better men in their humble spheres, to try the utmost capacity of time in the exertions of virtue and utility. How many men of talents, with some pretensions to virtue, and with a considerable scope for efficient activity before them, are absorbing their days in idle musings, or dissipating them in a trifling kind of social intercourse, or beguiling them away in the lightest kinds of literary entertainment, while they know and often express their wonder that *he* is adjusting an immense complexity of concerns in the time that they perhaps give to needless sleep—or maturing a plan for the revolution of states and kingdoms in no longer a space than they are employing about a capricious alteration of a garden wall ; and that while they are making a few languid efforts at intervals in the prosecution of some good design, he is executing his plans with a celerity which constantly reduces his enemies to the condition of the victims of lightning, who feel the stroke too soon to hear the sound.”—*Mr. Foster's Essay on the Improvement of Time, MS.*

Mortifying, that my scope of existence is so little with the feeling as if it might be so vast. The hemisphere of thought surely ought to have some analogy with the hemisphere of vision. Most mortifying, that this wondrous boundless universe should be so little *mine*, either by knowledge, or by *assimilating influence*! But this vision gives a delightful omen of what the never-dying *mind* may at length behold—may at last become! Oh! may I never again disobey or forget a Power whose existence pervades all yonder stars, and *is* their grandeur. It is indeed possible to engage his attention, and enjoy his friendship for ever! In this comparison, what becomes of the importance of our human friendships? Yet still I am *man*, and the social, tender sentiment at this very moment says in my heart, there are one or two dear persons whom I cannot but wish to have for my affectionate, impassioned associates in exploring those divine regions.

687. How all little systematic forms of Theology vanish from the soul in the sublime endeavour to recognize, amid his own amazing works, *the Deity of the universe*! i. e. to form such an idea of him, as shall be felt to be worthy to represent the Creator and preserving Governor of *such a scene*.

689. (Hearing an excellent sermon)—Most monstrous truth—that this sermon, composed of perhaps two hundred just thoughts, will, by the evening hour, be forgotten by all the hearers except—how many? Yet *every* just thought of religion requires its counterpart in feeling and action,—or does it *not*?

690. Here now the inestimable gifts of religion are carried round to 400 people (the congregation)—if it could be made visible, how many take them, and what part of them, and how much, and how many let them pass by, and *why*?

691. Surely the human mind, quenched as it is in a body, with all that body's sensations, is not a thing to be worked upon by the presentation of truth! How little, in general, it thinks or cares about the whole displayed firmament of truth, with all its constellations. No! the case of mankind is desperate, unless a continual miracle interpose.

692. O Truth! disclosed dimly at intervals through

the cloud that again absorbs thy light,—where shall I find thee?

693. Many things may descend from *the sky of truth* without deeply striking and interesting men; as from the sky of clouds, rain, snow, &c., may descend without exciting ardent attention; it must be large hail-stones, the sound of thunder, torrent-rain, and the lightning-flash; analogous to these must be the ideas and propositions which strike men's minds.

702. A person who can be habitually in the company of a communicative man of original genius for a considerable time without being greatly modified, is either a very great, or a contemptibly little, being; he has either the *vigorous* firmness of the oak, or the *heavy* firmness of a stone.

704. I have the highest opinion of the value of a *Ruling Passion*; but if this passion monopolizes all the man, it requires that the object be a very comprehensive or a very dignified one, to save him from being ridiculous. The devoted *antiquary*, for instance, who is passionately in love with an old coin, an old button, or an old nail, is ridiculous. The man who is *nothing* but a musician, and recognizes nothing in the whole creation but crotchets and quavers, is ridiculous. So is the *nothing but* verbal critic, to whom the adjustment of a few insignificant particles in some ancient author, appears a more important study than the grandest arrangements of politics or morals. Even the total devotee to the grand science *Astronomy*, incurs the same misfortune. Religion and morals have a noble pre-eminence here; no man can become ridiculous by his passionate devotion to *them*; even a *specific* direction of this passion will make a man sublime, witness *Howard*; *specific*, I say, and correctly, though, at the same time, *any* large plan of benevolence must be comprehensive, so to speak, of a *large quantity* of morals.

705. Delightful conversational reverie on the idea of an angel living, walking, conversing with one for a month. Month of ecstatic sentiment! What profound and incurable regrets for his going away.

707. All *reasoning* is *retrospective*; it consists in the application of facts and principles previously known. This will

show the very great importance of knowledge, especially that kind which is called Experience.

708. The question that leads most directly to the true estimate of a man's talents (I asked myself this question after having been several times in Mr. Hall's company) is this: How much of *new* would prove to be gained to the region of truth, by the assemblage of all that his mind has contributed? The highest order of talent is certainly the *Power of Revelation*—the power of imparting *new propositions* of important truth: Inspiration, therefore, while it continued in a given mind, might be called the paramount talent. The second order of talent is, perhaps, the *Power of Development*—the power of disclosing the reasons and the proofs of principles, and the causes of facts. The third order of talent is, perhaps, the *Power of Application*—the power of *adapting truth to effect*.

709. A very respectable widow, remarking on matrimonial quarrels, said that the first quarrel that goes the length of any harsh or contemptuous language, is an unfortunate *epoch* in married life, for that the delicate respectfulness being thus *once* broken down, the same kind of language much more easily comes afterwards. There is a feeling of having *less to love* than before.

710. When expressing a conjecture that, as in the previous course of love, so after marriage, it may be that *reconciliations* after disagreements are accompanied by a peculiar fascinating tenderness,—I was told by a very sensible experimentalist that the possibility of this feeling continues but for a while, and that it will be extremely perceptible when the period is come, that no such felicitous charm will compensate for domestic misunderstandings. I, however, cannot but think that when this period *is* come, the sentimental enthusiasm is greatly subsided,—that its most enchanting interest is, indeed, quite gone off.

712. An observant man, in all his intercourse with society and the world, carries a *pencil* constantly in his hand, and, unperceived, marks on every person and thing the figure expressive of its value, and therefore instantly on meeting that person or thing again, he knows what kind and degree of attention to give it. *This is to make something of experience.*

714. The pleasure felt in talking of *self* is not all pure *egotism*: part of it is the pleasure of talking on a subject which we think we well understand, and can therefore talk on easily and well.

719. It seems a thing to be regretted that so much of our Lord's *conversation*, consisting of momentous and infallible truth, should have been irretrievably lost. How much larger, and, if one may say so, how much more valuable, the New Testament would have been if all the instructions he uttered had been recorded. By what principle of preference were the conversations which the Evangelists record, preserved, rather than the others which are lost? That he did many things that are not recorded is distinctly said by John, last chapter, last verse.

720. Process of the Physical Creation. Darkness brooding; dim dreary light, herbs, sun, &c. *Analogy*. Consider the whole course of time as the world's *moral creation*. At what period and stage in the analogy has it *now* arrived?—Not more than *the first day*?

721. Effect of the application of astronomical science, or rather of the *immense* ideas derived from astronomy, to *modify* theological notions from the state in which divines exhibit them. (v. 687.)

725. A picture of a precipice reflected in a deep pit, transcendently beautiful! A small cascade from the top falling and fretting on point after point of the rocky precipice. Most beautiful aquatic greens, in many recesses of the precipice, nourished by this water. I wandered and gazed here five years since; with what difference *now*? Dismal sombre look of the farthest point of the shelving rock, visible down through the dark water of the pit. Pretty innocent dimples on the surface of this pit, caused by a gentle breath of air. *Analogy*—*Deep villain smiles*.

726. Most magical succession, for several miles, of reflections on the glassy surface of a canal, of the adjacent hill and wood scenery. One stripe of reflection of a distant scene, and a grand one, in a small narrow piece of water in a field, so that this foreign piece seemed joined *into* the verdant field. *Analogy*—transient view of heaven in this common life.

728. Saw a *halcyon*; felt more respect for it on account

of its classical celebrity, than a common bird. But how arbitrary are these distinctions; the bird has no *dignified consciousness* of superiority; and, except for its beauty, possesses none.

729. Recollective remark on my fastidiousness, in respect of personalities of kindness. I know scarcely *any man* by whose taking my arm in walking along I should be cordially gratified, and *not very many women*.

730. Observe with interest the tumults occasioned in a canal, by the sluice of the lock being opened; but recollected what vast commotion must be caused by the rebound of Niagara, and instantly turned away.

731. Hope to derive considerable influence toward simplicity and refinement from my *pathetic* conversations with so many charming natural scenes.

732. Every day struck with the wretched and barbarous appearance, and the coarse manners of the populace. (This was, I believe, in Lancashire.) How most astonishing that the Creator should have placed so many millions of the creatures he has endowed with noble faculties (or the seeds of them), in situations where these faculties and the whole being are inevitably debased! Wonder again what really *could* be done by *political institution* managed by a Buonaparte in morals. I cannot, will not, believe that all must *necessarily be thus*.

734. (Conclusion of a moral, monitory letter to a young acquaintance.) "I scarcely need to remark on the value of youth, with all its living energy; but I may express my regret at seeing all around me, a possession so sweet and fair, so miserably poisoned and stained. I have only a question or two for *you*. Why do you think it happy to *be* young? Why? When you shall be advanced toward the conclusion of life, why will you think it happy to *have been* young? Is there the least possibility or danger that then you may not think so at all? Why do you look with pleasure on the scene of coming life? Does the pleasure spring from a sentiment less noble than the hope of securing as you go on, those inestimable attainments, which will not decay with declining life, and may consequently set age, and time, and dissolution at defiance? You gladly now see life before you, but there is a moment which you

are destined to meet when you will have passed across it, and will find yourself at the farther edge. Are you perfectly certain, that at that moment you will be in possession of something that will enable you not to care that life is gone? If you should *not*, what then?"

(I transcribe the conclusion, because the entire copy is not worth preserving. It was written to a young woman, the daughter of one of the members of a church to which I preached, whose unfortunate circumstances engaged a measure of my benevolence. I proposed writing several more letters adapted to insinuate instruction. No. 500 was the beginning of the second, which I never finished nor sent; I found the person was so worthless, that any continued attention would involve my character.)

735. Important reflection in opposition to the regret of not having seen more of the world in each of its departments. But I have seen far more of the world, *i. e.* of event, character, and natural scenes, than I have *turned into knowledge*, and this alone could be the value of seeing still more."

737. "Looking at these objects *is* reading!" said I to myself, while beholding sheep, meads, &c. "Is not this more than reading descriptions of these things?" I had been regretting, how little I had read respecting some things that can be seen.

739. (Written in a very pensive mood, and when disposed to complain (unjustly) of the manners of an estimable and interesting friend.)

— Feel this insuperable individuality. Something seems to say, "Come, come away; I am but a gloomy ghost among the living and the happy. There is no need of me; I shall never be loved as I wish to be loved, and as I could love. I will converse with my friends in solitude; *then* they seem to be *within* my soul; when I am with them they seem to be *without* it. They do not need the few felicities I could impart; it is not generous to tax their sympathies with my sorrows; and these sorrows have an aspect on myself which no other person can see. I can never become deeply important to any one; and the unsuccessful effort to become so costs too much, in the painful sentiment which the affections feel when they return

mortified from the fervent attempt to give themselves to some heart, which would welcome them with a pathetic warmth."

740. (The following, too, of the same date, chiefly respects the same person.)

"*Omnis in hoc*," is the description of the only character that I can give myself to entirely. Green was very much this; a mind not only of deep tone, but *always* so. "*Omnis in hoc*;" yes, I want in my associate something like continuous emotion. I hate a neutral reposing state of the passions, that kind of tranquillity which is merely the absence of all poignant sentiment. I pass some time with a friend in the high excitement of interesting, perhaps, impassioned, conversation; next day I revisit this friend for the sequel of this energetic season, myself glowing with the same feelings still. Well, with my friend the enthusiasm is all gone by; his feelings are tame and easy; yesterday he was grave, ardent, every particle imbued with sentiment; we became interested to the pitch of intensity; I thought, "Let this become our *habit* and we shall become sublime." To-day he is in an easy, careless mood; the heroic episode is past and over; he is perhaps sprightly and flip-pant; his voice has recovered from its tone of soul; and he is perhaps complacently busy about some mere trifles. My heart shuts itself up and feels a painful chill; I am glad to be gone to indulge alone my musings of regret and insulation. *Women* have more of this discontinuity than men. No one can be more than — interested to-day, and *degagée* to-morrow.

A man of melancholy feelings, peculiarly feels this revulsion, with those who are pensive only as an occasional sentiment; not like himself, as a *habit*. His associates should all be of his own character. He emphatically wants *unity* of character in his friend.

I have more of habitual character than you —. A person would better know where in the mental world to find me. The ascendant interest of yesterday is the ascendant interest of to-day too. It is unfortunate in character for its nobler aspects to be transient. You have not sufficiently a grand commanding principle of seriousness to pervade and harmonize the total of your habits. A love

of the sublime is with you a sentiment; with *me* it is a passion. In the gaiety of innocence you sport at liberty, forgetful that a moral and immortal being should have all its faculties and feelings concentrated toward an important purpose. No one has given all the passion due to great objects till trivial ones have ceased to amuse him into even a temporary oblivion of them. Yes, after attention to the most solemn speculations, you can escape so completely from their fascination, so soon brighten off their interesting *sombre*, and enter into a mirthful party, and laugh with the utmost glee and *gaieté du cœur*. Not so *I*; not so Edwin, if he were a person of real life; not so Howard; not so any one who is seized irrecoverably with a spirit of ardour till death. Yes, my friend, you let yourself be what may happen, rather than deliberately determine to be what you should, and all you can.

741. Will endeavour not to forget the impressive lessons on *education*, both as to the importance and the mode of it, supplied by Mr. —'s family, the best school for instruction on this subject I ever saw. In that family, the whole system and all the parts of it, are so *correctly and transcendently bad*, that it is only necessary to adopt a directly opposite plan in *every* point to be exactly right.

I suppose it never occurs to parents that to throw vilely educated young people on the world is, independently of the injury to the young people themselves, a positive *crime*, and of very great magnitude; as great for instance, as burning their neighbour's house, or poisoning the water in his well. In pointing out to them what is wrong, even if they acknowledge the justness of the statement, one cannot make them feel a sense of *guilt*, as in other proved charges. That they *love* their children extenuates to their consciences every parental folly, that may at last produce in the children every desperate vice.

742. At an association lately, observed how little human beings as individuals interest one another, beyond the very narrow limits of relationship, love, or uncommonly devoted friendship. There were several persons with whom I had been acquainted complacently, but without any particular attachment, several years before; and had not seen them for a considerable interval. We met, shook hands, "How

do you do?" "I am glad to see you." "What have you been doing all this while?" with a mutual slight smile of complaisance, or of transient kindness, and then in a minute or two, we had passed each other, to perform the same ceremony in some other part of the room, without any further recollection or care respecting each other. And yet these insipid assemblages of people, from a hundred miles' distance, are said to be, in a great measure, for the sake of *affection*, friendship, &c.

So in London lately, my acquaintance might happen, or might not happen, to make a slight inquiry about some subject deeply interesting to myself; and if they *had* happened, by the time that I had *constructed* the first sentence of reply, the question was forgotten and something else adverted to. So one does one's self in the same case; so every one does; we are interested only about self, or about those who form a part of our self-interest. Beyond all other extravagances of folly is that of expecting or wishing to live in a great number of hearts. How very *reasonably probable* is the prevalence of Godwin's universal philanthropy!!

744. The eloquent Coleridge sometimes retires into a sublime mysticism of thought: he robes himself in moonlight, and moves among images of which we can not be assured for a while whether they are substantial forms of sense or fantastic visions.

745. *Powers of Language. Qy.* Are the powers—the capacity of human language limited by any other bounds than those which limit the mind's powers of conception. Is there within the possibility of human conception a certain order of ideas which no combinations of language could express? Would the English language, for example, in its strongest possible structure absolutely sink and fail under such conceptions as we may imagine a mighty spirit of the superior or nether regions to utter—*so* fail as not to make these ideas distinctly apparent to the human mind, supposing all the while, that the mind *could* fully admit, and *comprehend* these ideas if there were any adequate *vehicle* to convey them? Could Divine Inspiration itself, without changing the structure of the mind, impart to it such ideas as no language could express? If a poet were to come into the

world endowed with a genius, suppose ten times more sublime than *Milton's*, must he not abandon the attempt at composition in despair, from finding that language, like a feeble tool, breaks in his hand—from finding that when he attempts to pour any of his metal fluid into the vessel of language, that vessel in a moment melts or bursts;—from finding, that though he is *Hercules* every inch, he is armed but with a distaff, and cannot give his mighty strength its proportional effect without his *club*?

748. The successes of intellectual effort are never so great as when aided by the affections that animate social converse.

753. A great defect in the intellectual economy of my life; I have made many observations on men and things, but have let these observations remain in *insulated bits*, and have seldom referred them to any general principles of truth, or of the Philosophy of the human mind. Such observations have a *particular* use when applied to *circumstances*, but not the *general* use of perfecting *system*, or illustrating theory.

Qy. Has this defect been owing to indolence or incapacity?

754. Struck lately at observing in myself with how little change of feeling I passed from an address to the Deity to an apostrophe to an absent friend. It was indeed a very dear friend.

756. Every thinker, writer, and speaker, ought to be apprised that *understanding* is the basis of all mental excellence, and that none of the faculties projecting *beyond* this basis can be either firm or graceful. A mind may have great dignity and power, whose *basis* of judgment, to carry on the figure, is broader than the other faculties that form the superstructure: thus a man whose memory is less than his understanding, and his imagination less than his memory, and his wit none at all, may be an extremely respectable, able man—as a pyramid is sufficiently graceful and infinitely strong;—but not so a man whose memory or fancy is the widest faculty, and then his judgment more confined. Not but that a man may have a powerful understanding while he has a still more powerful imagination; but he would be a much superior man to what he is now, if his understanding could be extended to the dimensions of his fancy, and his fancy reduced to the dimensions of his present understanding, the faculties thus changing places.

In eloquence, and even in poetry, which seems so much the lawful province of imagination, should imagination be ever so warm and redundant, yet unless a sound discriminating judgment likewise appear, *it is not true poetry*; no more than it would be painting if a man took the colours and brush of a painter, and stained the paper or canvas with *mere patches of colour*. I can thus exhibit *colours* as well as he, but I cannot produce his *forms*, to which his colours are quite secondary.

Images are to sense what colours are to design. The productions of intellect and fancy combined are to those of good intellect alone, what a *picture* is to a *drawing*; each must have correct form, proportions, light and shade, &c.,—with these alone the drawing may be pleasing and striking—at least it will *do*; the picture having both these recommendations, and the richness of colours in addition, is much more beautiful and like reality; but the drawing is preferable to a square mile of *mere* colours.

In short no orator or poet can possibly be a *better* orator or poet than he is a *thinker*.

757. Effect on my cast of ideas from musing so much *sub dio*. A sort of vacant outline of greatness; a wideness of compass without solidity and exactness.

760. Divine wisdom has allotted various kinds and divisions of ability to human minds, and each ought to be content with his own when he has ascertained *what*, and of what dimensions it really is. Let not a poet be vexed that he is not as much adapted to mathematics as to poetry; let not an ingenious mechanic regret that he has not the powers of eloquence, sentiment, and fancy. Let each cultivate to its utmost extent his *proper* talent; but still remembering that *one part* of the mind depends very much on the *whole*, and that therefore every power should receive an attentive cultivation, and that various acquisitions are necessary in order to give full effect to the one in which we may excel.

To *reason* well, is most essential to *all kinds* of mental superiority. The Bible forcibly displays this division of forces, under the illustration of the human body, 1 Cor. xii.

761. A very important principle in education, never to confine children long to any one occupation or place. It

is totally against their nature, as indicated in all their voluntary exercises. Was very much struck with this consideration to-day. I was incommoded awhile by three or four children in front of the house, who made an obstreperous noise, from the glee of some amusement that seemed to please them exceedingly. But I *knew* that they would not be pleased very long; accordingly in about an hour they were tired of sport, and went off in quest of something else. I inferred the impossibility, in the discipline of education, of totally restraining the innate propensity, and the folly of attempting it.

762. Observed with regret one or two children of a respectable family mingling in this group with several little dirty profane blackguards. *Qu.* As to the best method of preventing all communication of children meant to be educated in the best manner, with all other children, whether of the vulgar class, or the genteel, which will do as much mischief as the vulgar.

764. Went to Thornbury Church, in order to ascend the tower, which is very high. Walked (Hughes and I) about awhile in the church. Saw one or two ancient monumental inscriptions, and looked with intense disgust, as I always do, at the stupid exhibitions of coarsely-executed heraldry. Ascended the tower. Observed both in the staircase of the tower, and on the leaden roof of the church, the initials of the names of visitants, some of whom must now have been dead a century. Reflections on the forbearance of Time, in not obliterating these memorials; —on the persons who cut or drew these rude marks, their motives for doing it, their present state in some other world; the succession of events and lives since these marks were made, &c. Waited a good while before we could open the small door which opens from the top of the staircase to the platform of the tower. Amusing play with my own mind on the momentarily expectation of beholding the wide beautiful view, though just now confined in a narrow darkish position. Difference of the state of the mind, as to its perceptions, between having, or not having, a little stone and mortar close around one. Came on the top. The rooks, jackdaws, or whatever they are that frequent this kind of building, flew away. So ere long we hope

everything that belongs to the established church, at the approach of dissenters, will be off.

Admired the extensive view; looked down on the ruins of an ancient castle in the vicinity; frightful effect of looking directly down much lessened by the structure all around the top, of turrets, high parapet, and a slight projection just below the edge. Yet felt a sensation; thought of this as a mode of execution for a criminal or a martyr. Endeavoured to realize the state of being impelled to the edge and lifted over it. Endeavoured to imagine the state of a person whose dearest friend should, perhaps, in consequence of some unfortunate movement of his, fall off; degree and nature of the feeling that would effectually prompt him to throw himself after; morality of the act. *Qu.* Whether either of us have a friend, for whom one should have thus much feeling? Probability, from striking instances, that many *mothers* would do this for a child.

Examined the decaying stone-work; thought again of the lapse of ages; appearance of sedate indifference to all things, which these ancient structures wear to my imagination, which cannot see them long without personifying them. Thickets of moss on the stone. Noticed with surprise a species of vegetation on the surface of several plates of iron. Observed with an emotion of pleasure the scar of thunder on one of the turrets. Sublime and *enviable* office, if such there be, of the angel who wields the thunder and lightning. Descended from the place to which we shall probably ascend no more; this partly a serious, pensive idea; yet, do not care; what is the place, or any place, to us? We shall live when this is reduced to dust.

765. Repeated feeling, on traversing various rural scenes, of the multitudinous, overwhelming vastness of the creation. What a world of images, suggestions, mysteries!

766. We called on an affable, worthy, pious woman rather beginning to be aged (never married), who lives quite alone. Asked her whether she had not sometimes painful cravings for society.—She said she had not; and that her habit was so settled to solitude, that she often felt the occasional hour spent with some other human beings tedious and teasing. We could not explain this fact. Long conversation, in walking on, respecting the social

nature of man. *Why* is this being, that looks at me and talks, whose bosom is warm, and whose nature and wants resemble my own,—necessary to me? This kindred being whom I love is more to me than all yonder stars of heaven, and than all the inanimate objects on earth. Delightful necessity of my nature! But to what a world of disappointments and vexations is this social feeling liable, and how few are made happy by it, in any such degree as I picture to myself and long for!

768. Conjecture after observing the habits and conversation of some rustics, that, superstition excepted, these are identically the same as the habits and common places, and diction, of one or two centuries past. One thinks they *could* not have been at that time *more* ignorant, rude, and destitute of abstraction than now, and certainly the same causes that prevent *acquisition* will likewise prevent alteration. The *degree* remaining nearly the same, the *manner* cannot become much different.

769. Visit to a farmer. Has a wife and ten children. A great deal of mutual complacency between this pair. The children very pleasing. Played with several of them, particularly a delightful little boy and girl. Observed the various animals in the farm yard. . . . Most amusing gambols of the little boy with a young dog. How soon children perceive if they are noticed. In many of their playful actions one cannot tell how much is from the excitement they feel from being looked at and talked of, and how much is from the simple promptings of their own inclination.

Observed a long time, in the fields, the down of thistles. Pleased in looking at the little feathery stars softly sailing through the air, and appearing bright in the beams of the setting sun. But next observed the little sportive flies, that show life and *will* in their movements. What a stupendous difference? Talked on education. The advantages of a large family. Importance of making a family a *society*, so as to preclude the need of other companions, and adscititious animation and adventure. Absolute necessity of preventing as far as possible any communication of the children with those of the neighbourhood.

770. Very grand idea, presenting the sun and a comet as

conscious beings, of hostile or dubious determination towards each other. The comet, though a less orb, yet fraught with inextinguishable ardour, passes near the sun in its course, and dares to look him in the face. The aspect of fearless calmness with which the greater orb regards him. I *have* the image, but cannot express it.—Fingal and Cathmor, &c.

771. Conversation on the philosophy of *Prayer*. Certain fact, that whenever a man prays aright, he forgets the philosophy of it, and feels as if his supplications *really would* make a difference in the determinations and conduct of the Deity. In this spirit are the prayers recorded in the Bible.

772. Conversation on cruelty, and the cruel sports particularly among children and very young persons. Is not the pleasure of feeling and exhibiting *power* over other beings, a principal part of the gratification of cruelty?

774. What a divine enchantment there is in *mind* in every age and form. I have felt it this morning with little Sarah Gibbs, a child of three or four years old, who cannot yet articulate plainly, but of very extraordinary character for observation, thoughtfulness, and grave, deep passions. I took her on my knee, played with her hands, stroked her cheek, and never felt so much interested by any child of her age. Not that she said any thing scarcely; for though delighted as I knew with the attention of a person to whom she had been led to attach an idea of importance, she was serious, confused, and as it were self-inclosed; but I was certain that I held on my knee a being signally marked from her co-evals by an ample and deep-toned nature, of which perhaps the county could not furnish a parallel. She has a strange accuracy and discrimination in her remarks, and a sort of dignity of character which yet is not mingled with vanity, but which *puts one on terms of care* with her, and makes one *afraid* to treat her as a child, or do or say any thing which may *offend her sense of character*. She is affectionate to enthusiasm, but without any childish playfulness. When angry she is not petulant but *incensed*. She is loquacious often with her companions and her schoolmistress; but still it is all thought and no frisk. She is a favourite with them all. The expression of her countenance is so serious, that one might think it impossible for her to

smile ; indeed I have never seen her smile. Her parents are uncultivated people of the lower class, who have no perception of the value of such a jewel, and will probably throw it away. (Should not one be very much inclined to cite such an instance as something very like a proof, that children are born with very different proportions of the *capability* of mind ?)

775. Last evening, in a neighbouring family, I sat opposite nearly to a pleasing young woman, who was going the next morning to quit some of her friends, in order to assist in a distant scene of sickness and danger. I observed by a faint candle-light the very strong expression of sadness and emotion that fixed her features and heaved her breast ; and was forcibly struck with the great additional *effect* of a young woman's person and manners while invested with the half-concealed and suppressed signs of pensiveness and grief. How often in life it is probable that an extra-habitual exhibition of character like this may make the first impression that is cherished into love ; and how very deceptive as to the general state of character such an exhibition may be.

Is it a general fact, I wonder, that men are more captivated by a woman in a pensive mood than in a gay one ? If so, how prodigiously many of the young females miscalculate, whose constant effort is to be exuberantly smart and vivacious.

778. Mr. R., who has travelled over many parts of England, Scotland, and Wales, told me he had, at one time, a wish and a project to travel over France and the rest of the Continent. While musing on this favourite design, he one day entered the cathedral at Worcester, in the time of service. Walking in the aisles, and listening to the organ, which affected him very sensibly, his wish to travel began to glow and swell in his mind into an almost overwhelming passion, which bore him irresistibly to a determination. He could not have felt more if he had seen an apparition, or heard a voice from the sky. Every idea on the subject seemed to present itself to his mind with a surprising vivid clearness and force ; and he believes, that from that moment, nothing could have prevented his undertaking the enterprise, but the commencement of the war.

This seemed to be a happy illustration and proof of what

I had maintained a few days before, in a conversation on music, that it powerfully reinforces *any* passion which the mind is at the time indulging, or to which it is predisposed. This was maintained in opposition to several amateurs of music, who asserted that *sacred* music has a powerful tendency to produce, by its own influence, devotional feeling. They had mentioned, with strong approbation, a pair of reverend divines, who commonly make a small concert on the Sunday evening, and choose *sacred* music, as adapted to the *day*. The devotional effect of any music, except on devotional minds, was utterly denied and disproved; and it was asserted that a young man, very susceptible to the impressions of music, if inclined to vicious pleasures, would probably feel the sacred music inflame to intensity, and, at the same time, invest with a kind of vicious seductive refinement, the propensities which would lead him from the concert to the brothel. By the same rule a devout man, who should be strongly affected by music, would probably, *if other circumstances in the situation did not counteract*, feel his devotion augmented by pathetic or solemn music.

779. What a stupendous progress in *every thing* estimable and interesting would seem possible to be made by two tenderly associated human beings of sense and principle, in the course, say, of twelve or twenty years. Yes, most certainly; for one has been conscious of undergoing a considerable modification from associating even a month with some one or two interesting persons. Only suppose this process carried on, and how great in a few years the effect; and why is it absurd to suppose this process still carried on through successive time in domestic society? Yet how few examples of any thing respectable in this way.

784. What endless deceptions of the senses may happen. This morning I mistook one object for a totally different one, in passing it many times within a few feet; till I happened to examine it, when in a moment the deception was destroyed. What a number of reports and recorded facts may be of this kind.

789. Spent part of an hour in company with a handsome young woman and a friendly little cat. The young woman was ignorant and unsocial. I felt as if I could more easily make *society* of the *cat*. I was, however, mortified and sur-

prised at this feeling when I noticed it. It does, however, seem to be a law of our nature, at least of mine, that unless our intercourse with a human being can be of a certain order, we had rather play awhile with an inferior animal. Similar to this is the expedient one has often had recourse to, of talking a large quantity of mixed sense and nonsense to a little child, to even an insensible infant perhaps, from finding the toil or the impossibility of holding any rational intercourse with the parents. Fortunately, in this case the parents are often as much pleased as if one were talking to them all the while. One has, too, very often felt one's self making the child a kind of substitute for the parent, and thus easily saying to the parent in fact a great many things, some of which would have seemed too trifling, and some too grave or monitory, to have been spoken *directly* to the mature person.

790. Each fact that comes within one's observation, and illustrates or suggests some useful principles of conduct, should be set down in the memory as a lesson for one's own conduct, if one ever be in similar circumstances. *Remember* then, in case of illness and confinement, to cause as little trouble as possible to attendant friends; make a *great* and *philosophic* exertion to avoid this. There is good old Mr. B. here, a worthy man, and very kind to his family, chiefly daughters, all grown up, and most of them married. He has suffered a very severe illness, which made it indispensable for some person to sit up with him all night. For eight or nine weeks two of his daughters have fulfilled this office alternately, with an occasional exemption by the aid of a third person. Nothing can exceed their assiduity and affection, notwithstanding that he is an extremely tiresome patient. But owing to their having families of their own, they can seldom go to sleep during the day, after the watching night. The health of one of them especially is suffering materially, though she is far too generous to give him the smallest hint of it; and though he is greatly recovered, so as, in the opinion of all his friends, not to need this service now, yet he has no wish to dispense with it, nor seems ever to recollect how laborious and oppressive it must be; and will not allow other persons, even one of his other daughters, to watch with him as substitutes sometimes, to

relieve the two who have borne the main weight of the service, and who, he thinks, can do it better than any one else. Strange inconsideration.

792. I observe that all animals *recognise* each other in the *face*, as instinctively conscious that there the being is peculiarly present. What a mysterious sentiment there is in one's recognition of a conscious being in the eye that looks at one, and emphatically if it have some peculiar significance with respect to one's self.* A very striking feeling is caused by the opening on one of the eyes of any considerable animal, if it instantly have the expression of meaning. While the eye is shut, the being seems not so completely *with* us, as when it looks through the opened organ. It is like holding in our hand a letter which we believe to contain most interesting meanings, but the seal secludes them from us.

793. A very respectable widow, who lost her husband ten or twelve years since, told me that even now the *last* image of her husband, as she saw him ill, delirious, and near death, generally first presents itself when she recollects him. I always think I would not choose to see a dear friend dead, because probably the last image would be the most prompt to remembrance, and I should be sorry to have the dead image presented to me rather than the living.

794. It is a great sin against moral taste to mention ludicrously, or for ludicrous comparison, circumstances in the animal world which are painful or distressing to the animals that are in them. The simile, "Like a toad under a harrow," has been introduced in a way to excite a smile at the kind of *human* distress described, and perhaps that human distress might be truly ludicrous, for many such distresses there are among human beings; but then we should never assume as a parallel a circumstance of distress in another subject which is serious and real. The sufferings of the brute creation are to me much more sacred from ridicule or gaiety than those of men, *because* they never spring from fantastic passions and follies.

* "The human soul seeks the face for sympathy, as if constituted for sociality only through that medium—the living telegraph of all that is felt within."—*The Use of the Body in Relation to the Mind*, by GEORGE MOORE, M.D., London, 1847, p. 103.

796. *Qu.* Whether two much attached friends, suppose a married pair, might adopt a system of confidence so entire, as to be *total confessors* to each other; disclosing, for instance, at the end of each day, all the most unworthy or ungracious ideas and feelings that had passed through their minds during the course of it, both with respect to each other, and any other question or thing?

What would be the effect of this on characters of given degrees? and what degree of excellence must exist on each side, to prevent its having a most unfortunate effect on their mutual attachment?

CHAPTER IV.

REMOVAL TO FROME—PUBLICATION OF THE ESSAYS—
ECLECTIC REVIEW—MARRIAGE.

1804—1808.

MR. FOSTER had resided about four years at Downend, when, in consequence chiefly of the high testimony borne to his character and abilities by Mr. Hall, he was invited to become the minister of a congregation meeting in Sheppard's Barton, Frome. He removed thither in February, 1804. "It is a new place," he tells Mrs. Mant, "from which I write to you. 'And what place is this Frome?' you will say, 'and how come you to be there?' My good friend, Frome is a large and surpassing ugly town in Somersetshire, where the greatest number of the people are employed about making woollen cloth;—where there are several meeting-houses, and among the rest one where a Mr. Job David was a long time the preacher. This place he left some time since, after avowing himself a Socinian, which he had for some time been partly thought, but had not avowed himself to be. The congregation was nearly reduced to nothing before he left it. To this situation I was some time since invited, and was induced, from several considerations, to accede to the invitation. I am now considered as settled here. Among these considerations, undoubtedly one was, some advantage in respect of pecuniary means. But the difference in this respect is not such as to have been a strong inducement, if there had not been other considerations concerned. I have experienced the greatest kindness at Downend, and left my friends there

with great regret; a sentiment which I believe I caused as well as felt." To another friend (Mrs. Gowing of Down-end) he says, "I experience much more kindness here than my social, or rather unsocial dispositions deserve; and more than I should experience if those dispositions were fully known. You will not suppose me foolish enough to tell them all. I often make myself quite a social man; and if I do this you know, and perform the social duties, nobody has a right to complain. It is not, however, by going very often into society that I evince myself a social man, but behaving with decency when I *am* in it. To do this, is but the very lowest degree of propriety certainly, and especially when some of the persons I am sometimes with are persons of sense and great worth. I avow to you, I wish I were much less monkish, and much less in danger of sometimes approaching to misanthropy. To the family in whose house I am, I behave, I assure you, with great propriety, and give them but little trouble. I spend with them but extremely little time beyond inevitable occasions; and I dare say they are mistaken enough to suppose me one of the most studious men on earth. I never think of fairly sitting down for a conversation, nor even think of introducing any of those topics that have so often kept us up in your disorderly house till twelve or one o'clock. No, we are sober people here, and having taken our supper, go to bed, at least vanish from one another's sight. They are very worthy people, and good natured; and to me they are even more than sufficiently attentive. They have a fine boy about nine months old, that sometimes amuses me very much. They are young people in Wesley's connection, keep a school, and have some property independently. The house is large; so that I feel no inconvenience at all from the school. I sleep in a small chamber, the very room in which Mrs. Rowe died: and have for my studying (if I

ever did or could study) a room that was added to the house not many years since,—an exceedingly spacious room, with a rural prospect before it, but not comparable to the horizon seen from your windows. In this I pass the greatest part of my time; for I scarcely ever take any walks, not oftener at any rate than once in several weeks; though there are at the distance of a mile or two some very pretty scenes, in the form of narrow valleys, and sometimes rocks on each side.

“The congregation here is still small, though not quite so small as at first. In the evening, generally, there are as many as would make a pretty good congregation for the meeting at Downend, but the size of the meeting makes these appear but few. I have not yet attained, nor probably ever shall (from the loftiness of the house I suppose it may be), the power of talking away with that rapid facility that I had sometimes at Downend. I am obliged to speak more slowly, and that makes me speak more in one set manner, and deprives me of those variations of manner which accompany a talking style of preaching. I am likewise obliged to take somewhat more previous pains with my sermons, as I cannot so well trust myself to the resources of the moment. In consequence of this I seldom make a sermon quite so bad as I sometimes did in your neighbourhood; though I doubt on the other hand whether I have ever made one so good as some of the most successful of those you have heard. My greatest difficulty is to feel the influence of religion in my own mind, a sufficient degree of which would inspire in public a zeal and energy that would easily triumph over a few difficulties, and most of all over that barren, uninterested coldness which I so often feel and deplore. My dear friend, to cultivate individual Christianity is, and probably ever will be, the greatest of all our difficulties. Do you not find it so? With a full measure of

this religion in the heart, half the gloomy feelings of life would vanish; for the prospect of its end would be divinely animating, and all the cares of the course would be alleviated by a habitual trust in Providence, and a solid assurance of all dispensations and temporary evils tending and conducing towards final and infinite felicity. Let us then resolve to make more vigorous and constant efforts to obtain a large augmentation of this internal, this infinite and never-failing consolation. This is the only kind of labour, experience and reflection continually tell us, of which the result is infallible and infinitely estimable. Be this then our earnest care. If this concern go right, nothing else will long be suffered to go wrong. The shortness of this vain life, if it is *thus* employed, will be the grandest consolation. And this sacred possibility of making the shortness of life a felicity, is so much the more welcome that there is nothing I have yet found, or expect to find, that can make long life deserve to be esteemed a felicity."

It was during his residence at Frome that the "Essays," by which Foster attained his great celebrity, were published. They appear to have originated in his conversations with the interesting friend (afterwards Mrs. Foster) to whom they were addressed, while on a visit to her brother-in-law, the late Dr. Joseph Mason Cox, of Overn. "In our many conversations while you were here," Foster observes, in a letter designed to be introductory to the Essays,* "it could not fail to occur to us, by what a vast world of subjects for

* "It will not seem a very natural manner of commencing a course of letters to a friend, to enter formally on a subject, in the first sentence. In excuse for this abruptness, it may be mentioned, that an introductory letter went before that which appears first in the series; but as it was written in the presumption that a considerable variety of subjects would be treated in the compass of a moderate number of letters, it is omitted, as being less adapted to precede what is executed in a manner so different from the design."—*Advertisement to the first edition of the Essays*, p. vi. This letter the Editor has the satisfaction of inserting entire in the correspondence.

consideration we are surrounded. Any glance into the distance in quest of a limit, found no limit to the diffused and endless multitude of subjects, though it could soon find one to the power of investigating and understanding them. In these letters I shall revive some of the subjects which engaged and interested the social hour, and shall perhaps recall some of the hints or views that then presented themselves, in order to display them with greater amplitude and precision."

In writing to Mrs. Mant from Frome (June 20, 1804), Foster says, "I have confined myself very much, for many months past, about literary business, in which I expect to be confined for months and years to come, should life be prolonged. Having been idle almost all my life, I am at last become diligent, which I hope I shall continue to be, the remainder of it. I hope always to be constrained to it by a sense of duty; at present the want of that same *metal*, which I have lost all hope, at last, of gaining by the discoveries of dreaming, is an additional stimulus. One part of this labour has been about a volume which I have written, and am sending in two or three weeks to be printed; from which, however, I do not expect much pecuniary advantage, as being a first production of a quite unknown person. If, however, this first should be successful (a very uncertain experiment), I may produce more, and the second will have a better chance, if the writer have gained any notice by the first. This first volume will, I suppose, be several months in printing. It is on a very few subjects, partly moral, partly philosophical (as it is now the fashion to call so many things), and partly religious. The writing is not without some merit, at least in parts; though I can easily imagine to myself something better done, incomparably, and though no reader will probably see more clearly where and what the faults are, than I shall

myself. I think I have not a great deal of vanity, that is the love of praise. I feel I have some of it, and there is nothing that excites, when I reflect, more self-contempt than this feeling. To seek the praise that comes from God only, is the true nobleness of character; and if the solicitude to obtain this praise were thoroughly established in the soul, all human notice would sink into insignificance and vanish from regard; except as a good man might consistently wish for the favour of men, in order to influence those men to what is good, by means of their opinion of him; or again, excepting as it may be very correct to wish to gain the applauding feelings of a few dear friends and connexions, in order to secure more completely their *affectionate* feelings."

In his next letter to the same correspondent (April 25, 1805), he explains the cause of the delay in the publication of the work. "When I wrote to you last, I believe I told you I had completed a task of authorship on which I had been employed for a year or two before. What a fool I was, even so lately as when I told you this! I had, it is true, written more than enough for a considerable volume, but I had not begun to revise and correct it, in order to write it for the press. When I began this work and had proceeded a little way, I found I had a job on my hands with a vengeance. To my astonishment and vexation, I found there was not a paragraph, and scarcely a sentence, that did not want mending, and sometimes that whole pages could not be mended, but must be burnt, and something new written in their stead. This was often a most irksome and toilsome business, much more so than the first writing. On the whole, I verily believe the revision and new modelling of the job has cost quite as much mental exertion as the original writing of it. In this business I have been employed ever since the time that I wrote to you, and that was last summer, till very lately. This exercise has, how-

ever, been a most excellent lesson in composition, so that I shall in the next instance do better the first time, and, therefore, never have again such a long and irksome task. This task is finished a little while since, and I am now presenting myself to the public."

Before the manuscript was sent to the press, the author submitted it to the critical judgment of his friend Mr. Hughes. "I like," he says, "the method and distinctness of your remarks. It is needless I suppose to observe, that freedom and even severity on your part, and obstinacy on mine, are to be held entirely warranted and innocent. As to the *doubt* which you express, whether you shall be entirely *obsequious*, I do not know how much it implies, but certainly I should myself, in the same case, feel the duty of an absolute *practical* obsequiousness, however my own opinion might differ,—except in the case of some obvious inadvertency, and this I believe will rarely occur in my manuscript, since the care has been very great. I am glad of your remarks, not the less, and am certain, independently of examining them, of profiting by many of them. I would make one remark once for all, viz., that when a man has written so much as to have formed his style, it will have a certain *homogeneity*, from which it will result that the substitution of different forms of expression will not always be an improvement, even when *they are better in themselves*, since they may not be of a piece with his habitual manner of expression."

On the publication of the work, Mr. Hughes, by his personal exertions, circulated nearly one-fifth of the whole edition. He presented copies to Mr. Wilberforce, Lord Teignmouth, and other persons of note and influence. "Horne Tooke has your volumes," he tells Mr. Foster. "I went over to make him a helper. He is considerably an approver. He says, 'Let him simplify; there is a basis

of good sense. If he is a young writer, he will do.' I requested him to mention the publication: he will." In about four months a second edition was called for. "The degree of success," Foster remarks, "is indeed very unusual; I trust it is a direct favour and dispensation of Providence, both for public utility and personal happiness. It will have been preceded and accompanied by numberless supplications of great sincerity and earnestness; a very principal part of which have been employed to ask for more of the spirit that would devoutly and benevolently *wish* to do good. I feel and lament a great deficiency in this great point; but I am not content to do no more than feel and lament it."*

The autumn, and the greater part of the winter, were devoted to a careful revision of the Essays; of which he gives the following account to a friend at Downend. "I have been excessively busy this, and many past days. If you ask, Busy about what? I answer, Mending and botching up bad sentences, paragraphs and pages. That book that I published had at least five thousand faults; and two or three thousand I have felt it necessary to try and mend. Many of them I have certainly mended; but perhaps in some places I have made new faults in trying to correct the old. The book will be in substance the very same; but very many pages, and a multitude of single sentences, will be very different. Many sentences are left out, and many others put into so different a form that they will not appear the same, even as to the idea. One great advantage I believe will be, that there will be much fewer obscure passages; you will feel that you understand more clearly than in reading the first edition. When I began correcting, I intended to alter but little, as I was not completely aware that great alterations were necessary; and as I did not wish any pro-

* To Mr. Hughes, Sept. 8, 1805.

prietor of the first edition to feel as if it were gone out of date in consequence of the new one; but when I went in earnest into the examination, I was confounded by meeting such an immense crowd of faults. I found that I must dismiss all delicacy respecting the first edition, and alter everything without ceremony. A great many needless words, and some that were too fine, have been sent about their business. Many long sentences are made shorter; many imperfect arguments are made fuller and clearer. The pages will have somewhat more thought, and somewhat less show. Several figures are dismissed. The connexion of thought is made somewhat more close and clear. There will not, however, be any such effect produced as to lead any reader to guess at the degree of labour which it has cost. This labour is not yet finished, nor will be, for at least a month. I shall have hard work every day for so long. About that time I expect the printing to be finished;—it is advanced a considerable way into the second volume. Two or three reviews have praised the book; one of them a good deal beyond its merits. But besides a number of magazines, there are at least half a dozen reviews to come, from not more than one or two of which I can expect much favour. I have written to the principal ones to mention that a second edition will soon be printed, and tell them that if they are disposed to be liberal, they will review *that* instead of the first, unless their arrangements are already fixed. It is not improbable that this may be the case with one or two of them, and therefore I shall receive a public whipping, a week and two or three days hence. If none of them mention me at that time, I shall be pleased; as I shall then reckon on their waiting till I shall appear before them in a better dress. But, however, *that* will not save me from the severe whipping, or else the contemptuous slight, of the greater number of

them. I shall open each of them in succession as I receive them, with this expectation; excepting as I have said one or two, from which I have some cause to expect a politer treatment. Hughes, however, tells me that as far as he can judge, I may on the whole bid them defiance, for that the volumes have excited so much attention that they will, in some degree, make way for themselves. The review which I mentioned as having praised too much, though at the same time it by no means omits to censure, was written by Mr. Hall. What a melancholy circumstance it is that he should at this time be your neighbour for such a cause. Every recollection of this gives me a feeling of gloomy regret. We had hoped that the calamity might never have returned; but now, if he should recover, the threatening omens will always hang over him. It is a most mysterious dispensation that so strong and sublime a spirit should be thus humiliated. You often hear about him, it is probable, and no doubt the splendour of his mind often breaks out through the shade that surrounds it. I hope he will yet be all himself again, and enjoy at least intervals of life free from this affliction. What a very, very deplorable thing it is that he has not written a great number of volumes; I never think of this without extreme regret; he would then have instructed and delighted to the end of time, even though his intellectual career had now been closed."

To Mr. Hall's review of the Essays he again adverts in writing to Mr. Hughes. "I have read this critique on J. F. It has an odd effect to see a name one is so familiar with, connected with public notices, praises, &c. I am glad the editor did change such an expression as you mention originally to have been in the critique. A number of the expressions as they now appear, will probably be deemed extravagant by most readers of the Essays, who

may see also these remarks. I have here an occasion of verifying that vanity is not the predominant vice of my mind. These praises give me but very little elation, nor would they if they had been less qualified with accompanying censure than they are. The idea that circulated commendation will assist to *sell* the work, and so may contribute towards an object which cannot be attained without—money—is far, very far, more gratifying than any mere consideration of literary distinction. I would barter all the fame of Buonaparte, if I had it, for the possession to-morrow of that more interesting object. But I am not unsolicitous to feel the influence of a higher motive still; at the same time I can see that I shall not probably have any great share of fame to barter. If the most partial of the public critics so strongly marks faults, what will be done by the mean, the prejudiced, the dull, or the spiteful? His remarks on faults of composition, are most pointed and discriminative. I have had myself the clearest perception of such things as they discriminate, in correcting for the second edition; to which I cannot but be confident these very just remarks will be very much less applicable. . . . The whole of this critique has all the acuteness and fire of its author. My thoughts have not yet had time to concentrate into any precise opinion on his remarks respecting theological diction. I have a pure certainty as a matter of fact that what I have advanced respecting the effect of this diction is true, whatever qualifying considerations ought to accompany the statement. What is said about Scripture language must be unfortunate, for Hall has totally mistaken me. I have expressly said that ‘the more the sacred oracles are quoted, if appropriately, the better.’ What I mean, is a barbarous mixture of Scripture phrases into the constitution of the language; not a frequent insertion of passages standing distinct in the page, in the

same manner as I have myself introduced them. Evidently there would be a vast difference between trying to weave the phrases of Milton or Shakespere, for instance, into the texture of my own diction, and citing clear, distinct expressions from them which should obviously appear foreign, and forming no part of my own mode of expression, though pertinently, or perhaps strikingly introduced in the places where they stand."

A third edition of the *Essays* was published in the summer of 1806. It contained a very few small alterations; and the author tells Mrs. Mant, "I have no idea of making any further alterations or additions, in case another edition should ever be wanted. The third may therefore be considered as quite as correct and perfect as I am able to make it."

In writing to Mr. Hughes (August 20, 1805), Foster says, "I am now beginning an essay on the Improvement of Time, for which I have thrown together a large quantity of rude materials, and which I foresee cannot be finished in less than a moderate volume. The subject suits me much, and I hope, if well, I may be able to finish it by the end of the year." He appears to have laboured upon this essay at intervals during the two following years, and at last to have abandoned it, in consequence of his becoming a regular contributor to the *Eclectic Review*. So fully was he occupied in this department of literature, that upwards of thirteen years elapsed before he again appeared before the public in his own name.

But to return to Mr. Foster's personal history. Some time before his settlement at Frome, a morbid state of the thyroid gland had made its appearance. It was so much aggravated by the exertion of speaking in public, that in May, 1805, he said, "I am strongly apprehensive that a short time longer will put an end to my preaching, by means

of a swelling of a gland of the neck. It began two or three years since, and has been progressive in spite of every remedy." In a letter of rather later date he tells Mrs. Mant, "Every month makes me more and more certain that I shall preach but a very short time longer. The progressive complaint of my neck will, I am persuaded and certain, in a few months more, silence me forever. After that I must depend on writing; and I am afraid it will be some time before I can in that way secure an income equal to that which I shall lose. As soon as I shall feel a tolerable certainty of this, I may trust to attain that social state which I so much long for. My prospects in this way are not actually those of despondency."

In a letter to Dr. Ryland, written not long before he resigned the pastoral office, he describes the condition and character of the congregation, and gives some account of his own circumstances and prospects. "I write to you," he says, "at the request of the people to whom I yet venture to preach. The physical cause which I have so long complained of compels me entirely and finally to relinquish the work. I ought to have done it a considerable time since; but have been withheld by a reluctance to lay down an office which I can take up no more. I may perhaps endeavour to preach three months longer, but that must be the utmost: and that will only be, (after two or three weeks,) once a day.

"The people therefore have desired me to request in their name, that you will have the goodness to mention whether you know of any person likely to be useful in such a situation as this, and also likely to be willing to undertake it. They desire me also to state such circumstances as are requisite of course to be known respecting the situation; which they say I can do with more propriety than they could themselves. This, however, involves some difficulty.

I need not say that the society has acquired, by means of Mr. David, an unfortunate character among the churches; and this, in the public estimation, can never be entirely reversed while it really consists of the same persons. The character, however, is in a great measure unjust. There are I believe two or three persons belonging in some sense to the society, who are of Mr. David's school; but the principal of these, Mr. G——, the blind man, never attends, nor ever would attend or long trouble any minister inclined to Calvinism. As to the society taken collectively, there is a total disapprobation of any thing like an approach to Socinianism. Some of them I believe are Trinitarians, in the common and simple sense, and some are a kind of Sabellians, not materially different from Dr. Watts, for instance. In regard to predestinarian opinions, I believe *Baxterian* would be the most appropriate and comprehensive term. A *very mild, moderate* Calvinist would not displease them. At the same time no preacher would suit that was not rather a practical than a doctrinal preacher. Nor would a boisterous manner be by any means acceptable. The society is extremely small, and a number of the most respectable individuals are far advanced in years, and therefore not likely to remain a great while in any terrestrial society. The church is too reduced in number to form any thing like a congregation; and to *gain* one will be a matter of great difficulty. The unfavourable theological reputation of the church will be one great obstacle: for people are afraid to join it, and serious persons are commonly most inclined to hear where they think they could be happy to become members of the church. A zealous man of good sense, and understood to be substantially *sound*, might have a tolerable congregation, but ought not to begin with *reckoning* on a large one. The people say they would greatly prefer a minister of some standing to a quite young

inexperienced man. . . . It does not seem necessary to describe the circumstances more minutely. . . . If you can suggest any thing on the subject, it will be thankfully received by the people here, and also by me, as I cannot but be concerned for their welfare, having a great respect for some of them, and having experienced the utmost degree of kindness and respect among them.

"I received your letter, and also one from Mr. Pope. I cannot but entertain the highest respect for the [Bristol] Tract Society and for its object, to which I shall be glad, if I shall find it in my power, to contribute. I am sincerely sorry to express myself in a manner so little positive, and wish I could more perfectly avoid any thing that may for a moment look like the cold calculation of selfishness. But my circumstances are changed; writing will become, in a few months, my sole resource for subsistence; it is an employment in which, as yet, I am inconceivably slow, and have even had experience enough to be certain that I shall always be so; I am entering on a plan of systematical reading besides, as necessary to an author, and which will occupy much of my time; and on the whole I am not yet certain that I shall be able to produce works, or to gain wages, beyond the indispensable claims of self-interest. I really am extremely mortified to answer in such a manner to a request which has the best kind of usefulness for its object; if I were not so slow—beyond all comparison slow—even when I make my utmost efforts, in the business of composition, the case would be different. But this is really the case; and you would be surprised, if I were to tell you, what a length of time and labour it cost me to write any given part of the small volumes already printed; or if I were to tell you how many months have been consumed in the mere revision and correction of those volumes for a second edition.

"What I may hereafter write will be directly or indirectly subservient to the best cause; and if I find that I can but sufficiently make out in the way of trade, I shall be very glad to meet the next claims of christian benevolence. How the trade is likely to serve I shall partly be able to judge in a short time, the second edition of the Essays being within about a week of coming from the press. When you see Mr. Pope, will you, my dear sir, tell him with a cordial promptitude I could wish to answer his application, and how much I wish I could have stated the circumstances of my present studies in terms less liable to the charge of cold self-interest?

"I rejoice to hear that your health continues and that your labours are prosperous. I read with pleasure your sermon on the death of Mr. Sharpe. May you still proceed in your various and important work with the animation both of present success and of the final hopes. . . . I suppose Mr. Hall is now in Bristol. Does he ever intend to write any thing? He will have been one of the greatest sinners of his time if he do not."

Mr. Foster resigned his ministerial charge at Midsummer, 1806. The greater part of the ensuing four months was spent at Battersea and Margate. "A preacher instead of me," he says,* "is now settled at Frome. I was very sorry, on various accounts, to surrender the situation, but I found myself compelled to do so. Since ceasing to preach the complaint is become much less troublesome; indeed it is hardly so at all, but I certainly believe I should soon feel just in the same way again if I were again regularly to preach. The cause is not at all removed; though the pain has ceased with the discontinuance of the exercise, the swelling is not in the smallest degree lessened."

On his return to Frome he applied with great assiduity

* To Mrs. Mant, Oct. 7, 1806.

to his new literary engagement. His first critical essay was a review of "Carr's Stranger in Ireland," which appeared in the *Eclectic* for November and December, 1806. The reviewer possessed the advantage of having witnessed many of the scenes described, and of having observed with benevolent interest the condition and character of the people.

"It will be obvious," he remarks, "to the readers of this volume, that the Irish people have a national character widely different from that of the English. And it will be the utmost want of candour we think to deny, that they are equal to any nation on the earth, in point of both physical and intellectual capability. A liberal system of government, and a high state of mental cultivation, would make them the Athenians of the British empire. By what mystery of iniquity or infatuation of policy, has it come to pass, that they have been doomed to unalterable ignorance, poverty, and misery, and reminded one age after another of their dependence on a protestant power, sometimes by disdainful neglect, and sometimes by the infliction of plagues? The temper of our traveller is totally the reverse of any thing like querulousness or faction; but he occasionally avows, both in sorrow and in anger, the irresistible impressions made by what he witnessed, on an honest, and we believe we may say, generous mind. He clearly sees that the lower order of the people, whatever might be their disposition, have, in the present state of things, absolutely no power to redeem themselves from their deplorable degradation. Without some great, and as yet unattempted and perhaps unprojected plan for the relief of their pressing physical wants, they may remain another century in a situation, which a Christian and a philanthropist cannot contemplate without a grief approaching to horror. Their popery and their vice will be alleged against them; if the punishment is to be, that they shall be left in that condition wherein they will inevitably continue popish and vicious still, their fate is indeed mournful, vengeance would hardly prompt a severer retribution. . . . It is not by tempting the conscience of the papist with a pitiful sum of

money, nor by forcibly interrupting the follies of his public worship, nor by making him, for the sake of his religion, the subject of continual derision, nor by unnecessarily excluding him from any advantage, that we could wish to see genuine Christianity aided, in its warfare against that wretched paganism, into which what was once religion is found degenerated, among all very ignorant papists in every country. We cannot but regret that both the civil and ecclesiastical rulers of Ireland should have been for the most part, unacquainted with all apostolical methods of attempting the conversion of the catholics. And it is melancholy that the *generality* of the ostensible ministers of religion at present in that country, should be so very little either disposed or qualified to promote this great work. We happen to know, that there are *some* brilliant exceptions to this remark; the lustre of whose character if it cannot prevail to any distance, yet defines and exposes the obscurity which surrounds them."

In conclusion, he observes:—

"A number of pages are occupied with passages from Mr. Grattan's speeches; some of which extracts we believe were supplied to Mr. Carr from memory, and therefore are probably given imperfectly. On the whole, however, these passages tend to confirm the general idea entertained of Mr. Grattan's eloquence, as distinguished by fire, sublimity, and an immense reach of thought. A following chapter is chiefly composed of similar extracts from Mr. Curran's speeches in most of which the conceptions are expressed with more lucidness and precision than in the passages from Grattan. These specimens did not surprise, though they delighted us. We have long considered this distinguished counsellor as possessed of a higher genius than any one in his profession within the British empire. The most obvious difference between these two great orators is, that Curran is more versatile, rising often to sublimity, and often descending to pleasantry, and even drollery; whereas Grattan is always grave and austere. They both possess that order of intellectual powers, of which the limits cannot be assigned. No conception could be so brilliant and original, that we should confidently pronounce, that neither

of these men could have uttered it. We regret to imagine how many admirable thoughts, which such men must have expressed in the lapse of many years, have been unrecorded and lost for ever. We think of them with the same feelings with which we have often read of the beautiful or sublime occasional phenomena of nature, in past times, or remote regions, which amazed and delighted the beholders, but which we were destined never to see.”*

In the following year (1807) he contributed thirteen articles to the same journal. He was now entirely dependent on his literary exertions, and necessitated to defer that domestic union, of which he indulged brighter anticipations than either the habitual pensiveness of his mind, or the results of his observation, might have been supposed to permit. The event, however, amply justified his prognostications. “Though sufficiently old and reflective,” he says, “not to be desperately romantic, I own I do indulge anticipations of a much more elysian character than it would be philosophic to avow. In as sober a judgment as I can form, there are more points of congeniality than in any instance that I have ever seen; and some of them, by being of a high and unusual order, will produce a sympathy of so much richer quality and more vivid emphasis.”† To his friend at Chichester he writes,‡ “I am still all alone; and since I wrote to you have lived a more solitary life than ever in my life before. This last six months I have lived a little way out of the town, in a house amidst the fields—into which fields, however, I hardly ever go, because I can see them so well through my window, the window of an upper room. I hardly ever what can be called take a walk, except merely in the garden adjoining the house. The beauties of nature

* Vide Contributions, Biographical, Literary, and Philosophical, to the Eclectic Review. Vol. i. pp. 8, 9, 11, 17, 18.

† To Mr. Hughes, Oct. 24, 1807.

‡ To Mrs. Mant, July 18, 1807.

are brought so directly under my eyes and to my feet, that I am rarely prompted to go in quest of them, even as far as from your house to the top of Wick Lane. Excepting one journey to Bristol I have hardly ever taken a good long walk for the last nine months. If this rigid limitation were imposed on me by some external authority, by the will of somebody else than myself, what a wretched prisoner I should think myself, and should watch day and night for an opportunity to make my escape. I almost decline all visiting, and have not dined from home, I believe, six times these last seven months. The family consists only of a worthy man and his worthy wife, with a little servant girl, and with them I pass only the time necessary for meals. You will wonder, I suppose, that I have not acquired one constant companion,—and you may wonder—but so it is, however. It is not that I do not sometimes feel this complete solitude oppressive; though, indeed, I have constant business on my hands, which does not allow much of my time to be spent in tedious vacancy. I am become, from necessity perhaps, more than any other cause, more diligent than when you knew me. Having ceased to preach, I have not a penny but what is gained by hard work. A large share of my work since I wrote to you last has consisted in reviewing books, which I have found a very laborious business, but also highly improving. . . . Perhaps I mentioned a book about the Improvement of Time, that I began to write a good while since; this is still far enough from being finished, but it must, if possible, in four or five months more. When it is printed I shall not fail to have a copy sent to you. I am very glad the other book I sent you afforded you any pleasure. With the public it has been much more successful than I had ever ventured to expect. This solitude, however, which is at present my lot, is not likely to last very long. A house is at length taken for me

and my intended companion, at Bourton, the village in the upper part of Gloucestershire, where she lives. But it cannot be quitted by the present occupant till next Christmas, and then the getting furniture, and the making of some slight repairs, will occupy at least a month, and therefore defer so long the expected union. It is only within a short time past that we have had the slightest idea of living at Bourton, and I was looking out for a house in this neighbourhood, though with little hope of finding just such a one as I wanted. A suitable house offering at Bourton, and M.'s mother and sisters wishing us to live there, I with pleasure acceded to the plan. I am particularly glad of it for her sake, for she would have come here (to Frome) a perfect stranger to every individual. . . . Not that we shall seek, or want, or choose, much society; but a very few female friends are desirable for a woman, and there are none she loves so much as her sisters. I, too, have always liked them most cordially. And I like the village, which is in a pretty situation, and inhabited, for the most part, by a decent, good kind of people. Next week I am going there, but only to stay about a week. It will be indispensable, I believe, for me to make another visit also, and return, before I go to remain there and be made happy. Thus you see, after long, long waiting, my prospects, with regard to this subject, are converging to a point, and that point comparatively not very distant, if no unforeseen prevention shall interfere to blast them, or protract their accomplishment. I certainly anticipate very much felicity, but I do not forget that I am in a world where a great deal of evil and sorrow *must*; absolutely must, by the appointment of the wise Creator, and by the very nature of things, mingle in the cup of life. I do not forget, that the grand essence of happiness must invariably consist in the enjoyment of the divine favour and the conscious preparation for

another life, and that the value of the other sources of felicity will, on the whole, depend on their being combined with this supreme requisite. The dear and inestimable friend, to whom I expect to be united, feels this conviction not less solemnly than myself; and we mutually hope that the complacency of affection will be heightened and perpetuated by a mutual zealous cultivation of piety, and moral and intellectual improvement. We are thoroughly well acquainted with each other's character, tastes, and habits; and both of us believe there is a singular, even an extraordinary, degree of mutual adaptation in all our views, feelings, and wishes. Perhaps I might have mentioned that my dear friend is about six years younger than myself. Two months hence I shall be thirty-seven years of age. . . . Our acquaintance has now been as much as seven years, and avowed connexion about five. I regret that the union has been, though unavoidably, deferred to so advanced a period of life, but I never wish I had been married very young. My general health is very good. The state of my eyes is not worse, nor the complaint which has compelled me to desist from preaching."

About two months before his marriage, he says, "It would be a foolish stoicism if I did not meet the snow-drops, and other signs and approaches of *this* spring, with a degree of interest which has never accompanied any former vernal equinox. I expect to leave this place in less than two weeks, which, however, I should not do so soon but for the necessity of decamping from this house, my host being obliged immediately to leave it. A few days will be spent in Bath with P., &c., and then I go forward, if all is well, to Bourton, to reside there perhaps a month, or perhaps more, chiefly in one room of the appointed habitation, before my beloved companion can be united to me to reside in it also. I do feel very grateful to

Heaven for the combination of valuable things which I hope for in this appropriation. Her conscience, intellect, and tenderness, are the chief. In her society and co-operation I do indulge a sanguine hope of improving in every respect by a much more quick and pleasing progression than I have done in a given space during all these past years of gloomy solitude. . . . For a long time, however, I must be at a great expense for books, of which my stock is miserably deficient. There are innumerable things incessantly which I have occasion to want to know, but have no means of informing myself; and this will be felt as much at Bourton, while we may stay there, as it is here, from its distance from any great mart of knowledge."*

LETTERS.

XLII. TO MRS. GOWING.

Frome, Feb. 1804.

MY DEAR FRIEND, I reached here in safety, but with feelings very far from any thing like cheerfulness. The pensiveness caused by leaving Downend, uniting with the consciousness of no very favourable prospects here, made me gloomy. I was received, as I expected, with kindness by the family in which I spent the time of my previous visit, and in which I still am, without any certainty as yet how soon or into what house I shall remove my residence. It is a respectable family, and each of the persons in it is very kind; one of them is the very superior young man that you heard me mention; he is to take this letter. There is some expectation of my lodging in the house in which Mrs. Rowe lived and died, in which I wish I may not be disappointed, as it is in a very conve-

* To Mr. Hughes, Feb. 15, 1808.

nient situation : if I had a little superstition, I should be interested in the house on her account ; but I am too old to be strongly susceptible of a feeling of this kind.

I probably expressed to you that no very sanguine prospects attended my removal hither. Nothing can be more dreary than a large lofty meeting-house with a very small handful of hearers who are never likely to become much more numerous. Some fatal destiny seems to have decreed that I am not to be any where of much use as a public speaker, nor perhaps indeed in any other capacity. It required all the force that I felt in the reasons which induced me to leave Downend, to determine me to fix in a situation like this.

I left your house with great regret, and shall always feel an animated pleasure in seeing you again. Your habitual and extreme kindness can never be lost to my memory, nor the recollection of the immense number of animated conversations that we have held on so many subjects. Some of those subjects I hope we shall discuss yet again. . . . These are very gloomy times, and there is too little reason to hope for any speedy amendment. But no times and no successes would exempt reflective minds from feeling a fatal deficiency in all the resources under the sun. It is only the anticipation of a superior state, that can save life in *any* circumstances from deserving to be called wretched. . . .

XLIII. TO MRS. MANT.

Frome, June 20, 1804.

. . . . It was peculiarly painful to me to leave the neighbourhood of that interesting and noble friend that I have sometimes mentioned to you, who has always been kind, and whom no distance of time or place can make less dear to me. I shall however not unfrequently see her, as I am not much more than twenty miles distant. I have no expectation of finding here any friends equally interesting as those that I have found in former times, nor do I wish to replace the former by new ones if I could. As to that

other most interesting person on whom so much of my happiness depends, I am yet far enough from having appropriated her as a domestic associate; nor can any divinations within my power to use inform me or you when such an event will take place. It might soon perhaps be accomplished if I were to dream of some spot where one of the great pots full of old pieces of gold had been hidden and lost for centuries, and then were to go to the marked place in the night, and after digging several hours near the old tree or under the old wall, should strike at last on the crock which contains the dear omnipotent dust.—A little of this material I want, not at all for the sake of satisfying any desires of vanity or pride, in the one individual or the other, but just for the sake of necessary use, since these are very bad times you know: that abominable vermin called *taxes*, a far more mischievous creature than the locusts of Egypt, eating up every green thing, and every other thing of every other colour. I do hope, however, that the time may not be very far distant when, even in spite of this voracious and infernal breed, I may hope to reap a little harvest of the sweetest kind of felicity.

... I fear you may be again the victim of that grievous head-ache which will render a season of so much beauty a season of unmingled melancholy. I should be very glad to know that this is not the case; but that the brilliance of the morning, and the solemnity of the evening, the beauties of the field, and the songs of the grove, bring you their whole tribute of luxury, which tribute they bring only to health. If you are again oppressed with illness, you need other consolations than all the visible creation can impart; and most happily, my friend, it is not now the first time that you have had recourse to these superior consolations, the efficacy of which you have found capable of alleviating the heaviest griefs, and which you know it is not in vain to seek. The Being that gives beauty to the earth and grandeur to the sky, is well able to sustain those souls that are more estimable in his regard than the whole material creation. To that Being there is ready access at every moment, and one short pathetic supplication to him will be of more value to the mind than all the rhapsodies that the enthusiasts of nature ever uttered, and the reveries

that poets ever dreamed. If however you are in tolerable health, you are unpardonable if you do not sometimes, as often as possible, regale yourself with rural sweetness. This I say with emphasis, though I have myself scarcely taken a walk this month, except as part of a journey that I was lately obliged to make. . . . I was interested and amused by some of the articles of intelligence which you gave me. . . . As to that spiritless dog, John S—, I have lost all hope of him, if he have not by this time accomplished his business. Perhaps, however, I may be mistaken; he may be proceeding most regularly with measured steps to his purpose, having begun the undertaking on a calculation that by waiting on the lady an hour and a half or so each Christmas-day, the great achievement might be accomplished in *thirty years*. Patience, then, my good friend S., for twenty and five years more, and you shall be the happiest fellow in Sussex. There's nothing like your steady rogues, that can follow a purpose for fifty years at a heat. I was something very like sorry to hear that Mr. R., notwithstanding all his merits and sacrifices, is finally excluded from the band of gentle warriors. Really when a worthy old man has set his heart on some interest that is not absolutely bad, though it be foolish for him to pursue it, one is sorry when he is disappointed. I was pleased to hear that your old servant Dolly was married; it looks like a kind of *safety* for the character of a wild girl. One has, however, I think seldom known a composition less likely to make a respectable wife than she. So little sense and so much caprice will be a pleasant mess for her good owner, whoever it be that has caught this piece of good fortune. I wonder if she is still pretty; *that* very likely did the business . .

XLIV. TO MISS MARIA SNOOKE.

[Introductory Letter to the Essays.*]

Near Bristol, August 30, 1804.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—You will accept my most sincere acknowledgments for the allowance you have given me. I shall prove how far I am sensible of its value, by the ample and frequent use I shall make of it.

The coldness and languor incident to solitary speculations will be relieved by the half-social spirit supplied by the constant recollection that I am writing to a reflective friend, to whom no sentiment of importance can come without its interest, and from whom a little power of imagination will seem to draw intermingled remarks and replies.

My mind, I am fully conscious, cannot do justice to any subject; but yet it does appear extremely possible, in such a series of letters as I have engaged to write, to suggest many thoughts not altogether common, and adapted, in their correct application, to produce a considerable effect on taste, on character, and on happiness.

In our many conversations while you were here, it could not fail to occur to us, by what a vast world of subjects for consideration we are surrounded. Any glance into the distance in quest of a limit, found no limit to the diffused and endless multitude of subjects, though it could soon find one to the power of investigating and understanding them.

It appeared that all things in the creation are marked with some kind of characters, which attention may decipher into truth—pervaded by some kind of element, which thought may draw out into instruction. Amidst these various views it could not fail often to occur to us, how many exercises of the judgment are absolutely necessary to secure the attainments which form even a tolerably accomplished human being. In these letters I shall revive some of the subjects which engaged and interested the social hour, and shall perhaps recall some of the hints or views that then presented themselves, in order to display them with greater amplitude and precision. And any to-

* Vide page 217.

pics on which I have or have not thought before, will be introduced, just as my mind may be in the disposition to select them, or as casualty or observation may suggest them.

For myself, I hope to gain by this course of writing some advantage in respect of intellectual discipline. A little studious labour will indeed be amply repaid, if it will assist to reclaim my mind from its inveterate most unfortunate habits of indolent, desultory, musing vagrancy, into something like method in its operations, and conclusiveness in their result.—If this reformation cannot be effected now, I may justly despair of its ever being possible. But I am determined not, without an effort, to surrender my mind finally to the state of a garden which produces a few scattered flowers, only to make one regret its being irretrievably abandoned to weeds.

Another advantage may be, that I shall be compelled to make, or rather to *admit*, an estimate of what has really been gained from observation on a world which I have *seen* so long, and from the various lessons of experience. This will be to find, if I may express so, the amount of the annual value, to the mind, of this mortal routine of rising each morning to view again the scenes of nature, to mingle and talk with various society, to transact accustomed business, to notice the occurrences of a little, or the events of a larger sphere, to read books, to observe the manners and disclosures of character among persons around, and ever and anon to turn attention on one's self.

It might be presumed that much would be taught by all these diversities, to an attentive and diligent spirit, formed to be the pupil of its situation, and not of a temper to yield either its character in obsequious conformity to the scene it inhabits, or its faculties to that thoughtless slumber which perceives none of the views that present instruction, but as the visions of a dream.

My friend, to *have thought far too little*, we shall find among the capital faults in the review of life. To have in our nature a noble part that can think, would be a cause for infinite exultation if it actually did think as much and as well as it can think, and if to have an unthinking mind were not equivalent to having no mind at all. The mind

might, and it should, be kept in a state of habitual exertion, that would save us from needing to appeal for proof of its existence to some occasion yesterday when we did think, or to-morrow when we shall.

As to myself, I have often been severely mortified in considering, if all the short scattered spaces of time in which I have strongly exerted my faculties could be ascertained, and reckoned together into one space, what a small part of life it would fill. This space, however, may be deemed the measure and the total of *real* life.

We can recollect that often while the hour has been passing, an internal faintly-accusing consciousness has said, "This is not reflection." "This is not reasoning." "This is vacancy." Often on looking back on a day or a week, we can mark out large portions in which life was of no use—in other words, was nothing worth—because the mind did nothing, and gained nothing; notwithstanding that the while the pulsation of the blood, and all the vital functions of the *animal* went on; notwithstanding that the dial noted the rapid hours, the sun rose and set, the grand volume of Truth was expanded before us, and the great operations of Nature held their uncontrollable course.

It was impossible not to regret that the power most made for action and advance, the power apparently adapted to run a race with any orb in the sky, should be so immensely left behind. And it was difficult to avoid the folly of wishing that the soul, too, were under some grand law of necessitated exertion and inevitable improvement.

I remember when once, many years since, musing in reflective indolence, observing the vigorous vegetation of some shrubs and plants in spring, I wished that the powers of the mind too could not help growing in the same spontaneous manner. But this vain wish instantly gave place to the recollected sober conviction, that there is a simple and practical process which would as certainly be followed by the high improvements of reason, as this vegetable luxury follows the genial warmth and showers of spring.—If all our wishes for important acquirements had become *efforts*, my friend!—If all those spaces of time that have been left free from the claims of other employment, had been spent in such a determined exercise of our faculties, as we recol-

lect to have sustained at a few particular seasons, how much more correct, acute, ample, and rich, they would at this time have been.

When the period of what is called *education* was past, and the important responsibility of the conduct of life devolved on ourselves, we did not imagine that the labours and solitudes of mental and moral cultivation had accomplished all their objects, and might now be dismissed to final repose. How fertile in every thing wise and useful would be that life, the early part of which should be the sole reservoir to supply opinions and virtues to all the rest.

The condition of humanity will not afford a wise and happy life on such terms. Life itself will go on gratuitously and without our care; but all that can give value to its progress, or dignity to its close, must be obtained at the heavy expense of unintermitted labour.

Judicious education anxiously displays to its pupils its own insufficiency and confined scope, and tells them that this whole earth can be but a place of tuition till it become either a depopulated ruin, or an Elysium of perfect and happy beings. Its object is to qualify them for entering with advantage into the greater school where the whole of life is to be spent; and its last emphatic lesson is to enforce the necessity of an ever-watchful discipline, which must be imposed by each individual *self* when exempted from all external authority. The privileges, the hazards, and the accountableness of this maturity of life, and consignment to one's self, make it an interesting situation. It is to be entrusted with the care of a being infinitely dear, whose destiny is yet unknown, whose faculties are not fully expanded, whose interests we but dimly ascertain, whose happiness we may throw away, and whose animation we had rather indulge to revel than train to labour.

There is a feeling of dignity in looking round, like the first man in Eden, on a sphere that is *my own*, on which no human authority may intrude, and bounded only by the laws of Him who commands the universe. What luxury of existence, if there were no duties, and no dangers!

But meanwhile the process of education is going on, even though unobserved, and tending fast toward the ultimate fixed form of character. Character grows with a force that

operates every moment; it were as easy to check the growth of a forest. You find, that to counteract any one of its determined tendencies, is a task of hard and recurring labour. Even its slightest propensity, when opposed, seems inspirited with the energy of the whole.

Habits are growing very fast; some of them may not be good; but they still grow while we speculate on them, and will soon close, like the ices from the opposite shores in the Arctic seas except dashed by the interruption of a mighty force. Is the spectator unconcerned while they are closing round him? Or is he descanting wisely on the *laws* of habit, till he become its victim? The mind is a traitor to itself; it will not wait while we are seeking wise principles, nor return when we have found them.

Every thing is education;—the trains of thought you are indulging this hour; the society in which you will spend the evening; the conversations, walks, and incidents of to-morrow. And so it ought to be; we may thank the world for its infinite means of impression and excitement, which keep our faculties awake and in action, while it is *our* important office to preside over that action, and guide it to some divine result.

I wish, my dear friend, to animate both myself and you to the utmost zeal respecting this high concern. As the education of our youth could give us only some faint impressions and rude elements of wisdom,—as we have since found that no great and estimable improvement will spring unsolicited or flourish uncultivated,—and as we perceive that the world, and life, and time, *will* mould us whether we will or not, if left to their influence, it is supremely worth our care that we be not fatally and irretrievably spoiled.

There are scattered here and there, many energetic spirits, who compel the world and all things in it, to pay them tribute. They deserve to be rich: would they could impart a small portion of their treasures! or the power of acquiring them. But I have often been struck at considering how entirely individual are all estimable attainments. The man into whose house I step a quarter of an hour, or whom I meet on the road, or whose hand I take, and converse with him, looking in his face the while—he, so near me,

that walks with me, that traverses a field or sits in an arbour with me,—he may have a soul fraught with celestial fire, stores of science, brilliant ideas, magnanimous principles, while I—I that observe his countenance and hear him talk—may have nothing of all this. He may for the last ten years have been assiduous in studies day and night, while I have consumed the morning in sleep, and the day in indolent vacancy of every sentiment, except *wishing*, which “of all employments is the worst.” What right have I to wish he should leave part of his animated and powerful character with me? But he cannot, if he would. He takes his resplendent soul away, and leaves me to feel that as *he* is individual, so too, unfortunately, am I. The mind must operate within its own self, and by its own will, else, though surrounded by a legion of angels, it would be dark and stationary still.

Yet, though designs and efforts must be individual, they may be social; and it is one of the most pleasing engagements of friendship to offer suggestions tending to assist such generous cares. I would not wish to hold a friendship that I greatly prized at less expense than this.

I shall feel the most animated pleasure in my solitude, if in these letters I can assemble from the regions of reflection, or of reality, into which I have wandered, any sentiments which may hereafter be recollected by you, as having contributed to any one of your pleasures, or of your improvements. It is not at all in the character of an *instructor* that I write, but as a cordial, respectful friend, certain always to find in the friend to whom he writes an animated rival interest in every thing that can enlighten understanding, or conduce to felicity.

I am, most sincerely yours,
J. F.

XLV. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Frome, March, 1805.

MY DEAR FRIEND,— I was afraid to open your letter, lest some savage beast or serpent should dart out of

it; and thought it vastly mild when I *did* venture to examine it. I wish you whatever domestic gratification is derivable from the addition of a son.

. . . . I am glad to hear a confirmation of the account of Mr. Hall's recovery. As to his writing, it does not seem more likely he will attempt it now than before; it is even probable he will be rather dissuaded from too much of the solitude and hard study which that business requires! that is to say, if other authors are at all like *me*. Your censures about the delay of my manuscript are totally misplaced; it is true I have been twice, part of a week each time, at Downend; but thus much you would allow that even propriety, had inclination not been a competent inducement, would have claimed. As to the rest of the time I have been very industrious; but I did not know, when I had finished the two first essays, what a task I had yet on my hands. When I came to the fourth essay, which is much longer and more important (as far as the word important can apply to any of them) than the others, I found it requisite to write the first part of it anew, and at five times the length; besides, the whole business is inconceivably tedious. I have often passed the whole day about two or three sentences, and could only determine to do more to-morrow; but I could not help myself; it was no affair of will. I have been so assiduous that I have hardly had one walk, except the journies to Downend, for these several months; and though I have been necessitated, often against my inclination, to make visits in the town, I have put off a number of persons, from time to time, with saying, "Certainly, Sir, I intend myself the pleasure of calling on you very shortly." Every thing was wrong in these two essays; there were scarcely three pardonable sentences together. This has given me a mingled feeling of being pleased and mortified; mortified that the first operations of thought were so incorrect, but pleased that I could clearly see and often mend the faults. The latter essays will exhibit more of the work of understanding, and more of what will please or displease as matter of opinion. As to how soon they will be finished, I am afraid to pledge myself, after my past experience of the utter impossibility of moving fast; but as I have only about half a dozen

sheets to transcribe, with very slight corrections, I cannot be many days,—I am afraid somewhat more than a week, but surely I think not two. . . .

I see no manner of reason why you should forswear the press. How many editions *would* you have your works go through? By all means write again; that is, after you have learnt of me somewhat more simplicity of style. You may believe me, that I am quite worthy to be a model in this respect.

. . . . Do you think we really *shall* do anything of permanence and of consequence before we quit this orb? There is nothing proceeding in this stupid town worth notice. I lately felt high elation in looking to an immense distance from it, that is, at Sirius, and some others of the sublime spectacles, in a glass of considerable power.

I was sorry you did not come to Bath last autumn. It is but thirteen miles from Frome. You would be treated very respectfully here, only you would be severely preached. After the preachers, who are extremely respectable men, there are very few persons here in whom I can feel any particular interest. . . . I should nauseate the place if I had been habituated to it a century. At first I felt an intense loathing; I hated every house, timber, stone, and brick in the town—and almost the very trees, fields, and flowers, in the country round. I have, indeed, long since lost all attachment to this world as a locality, and shall never regain it. Neither, indeed, for this do I care; we shall soon leave it for ever. . . . I now seldom comparatively think of politics; when I do, it is with a hatred of the prevailing system, which becomes but more intense by time.

XLVI. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Downend, March 26, 1805.

MY DEAR FRIEND,— It was necessary for me to come here this week, if I would see the person on whose account I came. I am very glad also for the sake of my eyes, which were become very uneasy, by the exertion of the mind perhaps as much as direct use. I have now

nothing to write but unconnected notices. First, I have admitted I think two thirds of your corrections, a very large proportion, you will allow, for the vanity of an author. . . . I have made a very few corrections also; one very necessary and very happy one about the beginning of the part referring to atheism. As the passage stood before, it connected the idea of Deity with *place*, in a manner which I had felt to disapprove before, but which on considering again, I felt absolutely must be altered. A considerable number of the modes of expression I have restored to the state in which they had stood before. I have erased most of the marks of quotation used where I had supposed the sentiments to be expressed by some individual; they are ugly and foolish; and by observing lately the usage of a distinguished writer, I perceive them quite needless. I have erased also several notes of admiration which you had introduced; I hate this figure mortally, and prohibit most absolutely the insertion of one of them more than the very few which I felt indispensable.

. . . . I perceive one mistake in your manner of *pointing* (that is, according to the standard of Gibbon, and some other of the highest authorities). When there are several nouns of the nominative case to one verb, you admit no comma after the last of them previous to the verb. Or when there are several distinct short members of the sentence converging into one concluding one, you admit no stop between the last of them and this concluding one. In this I am persuaded you are wrong, according to the dictates of reason, as well as the highest authority. Of the authority I am quite certain. A passage or two where you have introduced this correction will tell what I mean. "New train of ideas, presenting the possible, and magnifying the certain, difficulties of the situation." "Though a man is obedient, and probably will continue obedient, to habit," &c. "They are mistaken if they imagine that the influences which guide, or the moral principles which impel, this self-applauding progress," &c. Now I feel most certain that the comma ought to remain in all such cases, and that the contrary manner is a vulgar mode only of pointing. The authority of Gibbon is decisive, and he invariably points, in such instances, as I have done.

There is another circumstance, which I cannot now describe grammatically, but of which I sent an instance. I wrote, "Any man, whatever were his original tendencies, might, by *being led* through a different train, have been now a different man from what he is." You put it thus: "Whatever his original tendencies, might, by *having been led*," &c. Now in such cases I think you will perceive, if you consider, that two past tenses are an incorrect mode of expression. When one past tense is indicated, the other thing which was contemporary with the time indicated by that past tense was of course *present* as to that time, and ought therefore to be in the form used for present time. This, however, is not a good example. I much dislike the article *an* before a word beginning with *u*, as *an universe*. I do not know whether I am right in this, but I nauseate the full broad pronunciation of *u* as *you*. I cannot recollect to give account of the reasons for restoring my former mode of expression in places where you had modified it, but I should not have done it from the mere vanity of retaining *my own*. I have excluded Cæsar, whom you introduced among such men as "Alfred, Timoleon," &c. It was my object in that one instance to have them all men of *virtue*. I retain the appellation, "My dear friend," at the beginning of the fourth letter of one of the two first essays. I meant it not as an *address*, it had then been a singularity from the beginnings of the other letters; but merely an appellation, to stand *in* the commencing line, and not above it. I saw your meaning in altering somewhere a simile about *meteors*, but I instantly recurred to the former state of the comparison. It was indispensable to have it not formal and lengthened, but momentary and gone. Somewhere in the fourth essay I have made an assertion respecting the original of the New Testament, of this kind, that the terms which are now in our language *peculiarly* theological, were not so, as adopted by the apostles; but that they took their words from the simple, general vocabulary of their language. I do not express it right here; but it is a distinctly expressed idea in the essay. Now, though I have no doubt of this being *true*, you know how well qualified I am to *prove* it so. If it is not true (of which you will be able to judge), it can be omitted without making a violent chasm. If it is true, it

is a remark of considerable consequence in the question I am there considering. I have said, "sublimates martial into moral grandeur;" I do not know whether *sublimate* is exclusively a *scientific* word. I have used in one place, in the fourth essay, "lustre of array," as synonymous with *raiment*; perhaps this is wrong. . . . I have not one book of reference about me. I have not had an English dictionary of any kind whatever during the whole of my revision. I had somewhere used the word *partly* in connection with "divine grace," or the "divine Spirit's *transforming* a man." I wondered at your erasing this. Surely it is time of day to take care what we assert on this subject. It is impossible not to see that the transformation is *very* partial, even in the best men. I think I must trust to your discretion any slight corrections in the two latter essays. The care I have used assures me they can need to be but small, unless it were in the ideas,—and that is another thing. . . .

XLVII. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Frome, April 8, 1805.

. . . . I left the correcting of the two latter essays to your discretion; I have since thought I should not have done this absolutely, as there are many sentences which you might be inclined to modify, on account of their meaning, in a manner which I could not approve. I request you, therefore, if any corrections of consequence have occurred to you, to write them, together with the expressions as they stand independently of the correction, and send them to me. I am sorry for every addition to your trouble; but it will not take much time. You may think this one of the mean feelings of an author, but in the same case, yourself the author and I the corrector, you would have the same wish. Having a manuscript by me (I wish for the proof that I have been *sometime* laborious, that you could see this manuscript), I shall instantly be able to refer the detached expressions or sentences to their place, so as to judge of their connections. . . . What should you deem to be the reasonable auguries as to public success? It is an experi-

ment of great anxiety to me, from my progressive apprehension that the pen will soon be my only resource. Unless, therefore, I am successful in this trial, my prospects of life are turning again into darkness.

I am completely satisfied with myself as to the laborious care which I have employed. I fully feel that unless this volume be written well, I *cannot* write well. But, indeed, I am also certain that in many respects it *is* written well.

I am very glad, not that indolence has so long kept me from being an author, but glad of the fact of having not become an author sooner. A more advantageous impression will be made by the first production of so mature a character, than I should probably have made by a progressive improvement to the present intellectual pitch from such an inferior commencement as I should have made, even six or seven years since. I am gratified in feeling that my mind was reserved, either in consequence of something in its essential constitution, or from the defectiveness of its early discipline, for a late—a very late maturity. It is yet progressive; if I shall live six or ten years, and can compel myself to a rigorous, especially if to a *scientific*, discipline, I am certain it will *think* much better then than it does now; though in the faculty of invention it has probably almost reached its limit.

My total want of all knowledge of intellectual philosophy, and of all metaphysical reading, I exceedingly deplore. Whatever of this kind appears in these letters is from my own observation and reflection, much more than from any other resource. But everything belonging to abstraction has cost me inconceivable labour; and many passages which even now may appear not very perspicuous, or not, perhaps, even true, are the fourth or fifth laboured form of the ideas. I like my mind for its *necessity* of seeking the abstraction of every subject; but, at the same time, this is, without more knowledge and discipline, extremely inconvenient, and sometimes the work is done very awkwardly or erroneously. How little a reader can do justice to the labours of an author, unless himself also were an author! How often I have spent the whole day in adjusting two or three sentences amidst a perplexity about niceties, which would be far too impalpable to be even comprehended, if one were to state them,

by the greatest number of readers. Neither is the reader aware how often, after this has been done, the sentences or paragraphs so adjusted were, after several hours' deliberation the next day, all blotted out. The labour of months lies in this discarded state in the manuscripts, which I shall burn when I know that the volume is all printed. Less of this kind of loss, however, would be sustained in making another volume; the long revision which I have now finished having given me a most excellent set of lessons on composition, in consequence of which I should much better execute the *first* writing, in the case of producing other works. You will forgive this egotism; none of it appears in the book.

I must protest against all alteration of words, on account only of their being of similar sound to words in their vicinity, except in the case of a very apparent inadvertency. This is a very puerile kind of objection and criticism.

XLVIII. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

From, April 20, and May 8, 1805.

.... I have said, "Again, what is the value of all interesting moral books, but as instructing you in the true doctrine of happiness?" You would say, "Wherein consists the value of all interesting moral books, but in their capacity to instruct you?" &c. Both of us bad. "Wherein" is one of that class of adverbial compounds which is discarded by every elegant pen, and expressly condemned by Blair; (there are *whereby*, *whereof*, *whereto*, *thereof*, &c.) I am not aware that I have admitted one of this class throughout the essays. "*Consists*." It is one of my laws of composition always to prefer the simple verbs, *is*, *does*, *makes*, &c. to any more formal words, when they will express the sense as well; and this is one of the chief secrets of *simple* writing. "*Capacity*," is not the word; capacity belongs more to a *conscious* agent. I have spent and wasted several hours on this insignificant sentence. There is no need of anything about "value." Write simply, "Again, moral writings are instructions on the subject of happiness. Now the doctrine of this subject is declared," &c. The

plainest simplicity is always necessary in a sentence which proposes a topic.

I have said, "Your recollections will tell you that they have most certainly presumed to avow, or to insinuate, a doctrine of happiness which implies the Christian doctrine to be a needless intruder on our speculations," &c. You question the authority of *implies* with an infinitive mood after it. Since it is *grammatically* correct, and a very neat, quick way of getting out the meaning, I should venture it if there were *no* authority. But there *is* authority. I probably never use it in this manner without either a distinct recollection, or a kind of faint echo, of a sentence in a long printed speech, in my possession, of *Fox*,—a speech to which Mr. Favell told me, that Horne Tooke said he had hardly deemed even *Fox* to be equal. "Excellent illustration! Why, in such a case we should all have said the same thing; but what stupidity it is to *imply this to be such a case!*" (It is not a *newspaper* speech.)

. . . . I have written, "And what appears in these illustrations, as the highest form* of happiness? It is probably that of a man feeling an elevated complacency in his own excellence, a proud consciousness of rectitude," &c. I have attentively considered this sentence, and do not approve any alteration in it; it expresses just what I wanted it to express. I can by no means approve making the form or kind of happiness, to *be the man himself* who possesses it; nor the introduction of the word "cherishing," or any word, before the expression, "a proud consciousness of rectitude," so as to separate this from the preceding expression, "an elevated complacency in his own excellence;" it would be absurd to describe these as two distinct circumstances of the man's feelings. The latter is but a varied expression, an aggravation, an explanation, or whatever you please, of the former. The propriety of admitting this sort of repetition is supported by numberless examples in Johnson, and many others; particularly Hall abounds with them. The sentence would be more absolutely correct thus; "It is probably the *state of mind* of a man feeling," &c. But this would be unpardonably clumsy, and the point of correctness is here of trivial importance.

* "Brightest image," 9th edition.

I have said, "To shade from sight that vista which opens *into* the distance of eternity." Incorrect; as it would seem to say, that the termination of the vista is actually in the scene of the distance. It will be perfectly, or *sufficiently*, correct, to say, "opens to the distance of eternity." The expression, "the distance," as used by an artist, does not mean the measure of space from this point to some distant one, but the scene or region which is distant. "Vastness" has nothing to do with my meaning; nor could "vastness" be seen through a vista. "Distant eternity" will not do, because *distance* is the chief thing I have in view, as opposed to the confinement of all our attention to immediate objects. "Better country, the heavenly," expresses no idea of distance; has been used not many pages before, and would here be a very heavy, lazy, far-fetched, broken, ending of the sentence; "opens to the distance of eternity," will, when connected with vista, instantaneously and simply give the right idea to every mind.

. . . . I have said, "Have not the most enlightened and devout Christians, meeting death in their chambers, and the men who have publicly died for the best cause," &c. You say, "Have not the most enlightened and devout Christians, whether they have languished in their chambers, or have been consumed at the stake, disclosed their elevation?" and very much better, if this *stake*, a most odious word every way, and never to be tolerated except in narrative, could be got out. I would infinitely rather be a little rhetorical and say, "whether they have languished in their chambers, or passed through the fire of martyrdom, disclosed," &c. Indeed *consumed* is too passive a word; the expression should be one that indicates agency on the part of the glorious victim. I think it is the best as I have now expressed it.

. . . . "This number is small indeed, compared with, &c., but it is large enough to occupy the mind, and enable it to spare the heroes whose fierce brilliance," &c.

Obscure, as you say. My meaning is, that this select, number has the effect of standing representative of the heathen character, and to retain the mind's devotion to it, notwithstanding so many of the great heathens were bad. It inflicts a feeling of misery to be employed three or four

hours, as I have in this case been, about correcting a despicable sentence. I never had in my life a more perfect feeling than at this moment, of having laboured to think till I cannot form one single idea. I seem to have no more mind than the inkstand.

. . . . I will endeavour to introduce one line of a note somewhere, according to your suggestion, to parry the imputation of consigning all heathens to destruction. . . .

I do not think any good can be done in the way of mottoes. It is such mere chance to find or recollect any thing peculiarly apposite, and when it is not peculiarly so, one is always inclined to say, "Why could not the man have been quiet?" How often I have said this in reading mottoes. Any motto for the whole work, and therefore for the title-page, is out of the question, for volumes comprising a number of unconnected subjects; and one for a single separate essay looks very like poverty, unless there were one for each, which would be a quite desperate thing. The passage from Romans, for the fourth essay, would be too strong and rugged for an introductory sentiment. Nothing can be done; what is general cannot be particular, and is therefore of no value! what is particular cannot be general, and therefore cannot be applicable to the whole work. Besides, a motto in English alone would seem totally to forswear the scholar; and a motto in Latin would not be of a piece with that total exclusion of Latinisms which I felt necessary to preserve throughout the letters, because it will be known by a number of the readers that they were addressed to a female. . . . I am very unwilling to diminish the applause of Milton. The short notice of him in the last letter gives no proper place for a *general* estimate of his merits, and in that particular respect in which I have cited him, the applause *is* correct; he *is* evangelical far beyond every poet of consequence besides, except those whose names I have mentioned after him. If you think it *very* necessary, I will write a short note to say that I do not mistake him actually for Raphael or Gabriel. I deem a page or two about where his name is connected with that of Pascal, the best in the volumes.

It is a very new and uncouth thing for me to talk about *Lords* in any connection with myself. I need not say that

my reference to Lord —— was purely literary, not that I was more likely to judge in that respect from being totally ignorant of him in any other character than that of an author.

. . . All my considerations about language have resulted in an aversion to the formal, squared, *built* style, of which I observe many instances of the present time, so different from the easy and admirable style of Bolingbroke.

. . . You are entirely at liberty to dispose of as many copies gratis as you please. I should be glad that one were presented to Lord ——, with the simple explanation that I gave you a right of presenting a copy to whomever you pleased. It must not be in the most distant manner in my name, for I am most certain of the correctness of my perception of its being improper for a plebeian to attempt to impose on a Lord any kind of necessity of paying him any attention.

The style of your predictions certainly raises the pitch of mine; yet I can by no means be so sanguine as to expect the speedy sale of a thousand copies or the speedy call for a second edition. For one thing, *no* review will praise me, whether it were conducted by orthodox divines, by Socinians, or by Deists. No man might more justly appropriate the hackneyed motto, "*Nullius jurare magistri*,"—but the consequence will be, that no *magister* will approve or befriend me.

You are perfectly right in supposing that I live in Athens. This whole *city* will be rampant for *my book*, that is to say, five, or six, or perhaps seven copies at the utmost will be bought here. The number of persons in the town that ever open a book may be from fifteen to twenty-five, and it may be imagined how many of them would be disposed to *buy* a half-guinea book.

XLIX. TO MRS. MANT.

Frome, April 25, 1805.

. . I had not heard of Mr. ——'s death before I received your letter. I felt a very pensive sentiment, while I so easily and so vividly recalled my interviews and conversations with him. I seemed to see and hear him

as distinctly as when I used to sit or walk with him. I really had a great esteem for him; but yet, my dear friend, we perfectly know that his character was an extremely defective one, even since his becoming a Christian professor, not to go so far back as his juvenile history. Alas! my dear friend, how few are the persons that display the full consistent nobleness of the Christian character. In spite, however, of Mr. —'s striking faults, I retain such an impression of his uniform, friendly attention to me, and of his ample knowledge, from which I gained much and various information, which will always be useful to me, that I did feel a greater impression from the information of his death, than I had felt on account of any removal for a long time before; and more than I should from hearing of the death of any person in Chichester, except one, and that one is R. Mant.

. . . . How very far you are from envying the frivolous taste, or the mean selfishness and spite, which have been the causes of your having so little intimacy, and partly losing the degree that you once had with —. How infinitely preferable it is for you to go alone, than to go *their way* for the sake of company; especially while you can have at any hour, and every hour, the company of the greatest Power and the best Friend in the universe. All company will be insipid to a thoughtful mind if it is deprived of this; if it enjoy this habitually, it will be in a very great degree independent of all other. I say, in a *great degree*, for we have all felt how desirable is agreeable human society, and have been glad when we have had easy access to it. To become quite independent of it is such an attainment that even I, who have many dispositions tending to solitude, and those dispositions confirmed by habit, have not yet quite reached such a state of mind. If I could fully have had my will, however, I should, since I came to this place, have been very much of a recluse. And indeed on the whole, I have been so. Long spaces of time during the last months have been passed in a more solitary manner than any former part of my life; and I have deemed it a piece of good fortune when I have passed a number of days without going out of the house, and without any one calling on me. Indeed I am very seldom called on, for I never

invite any one, except two women, sisters, of great worth, in this town, and they have only called once. The time that I spend with the family in whose house I lodge, is extremely little; I systematically make it as little as possible, because I have my own affairs. I have been a rather assiduous student since I came into this house; though still there is great room to mend. It is most melancholy to review my life, and see the habitual indolence which has made it barren.

. . . . What are the feelings with which you meet another spring? Are you still as insulated from acquaintance? Do you continue to enjoy the consolations of religion? I have no doubt you still feel the same detachment, happy detachment, I may most justly call it, from an anxious love of life. Think, my dear friend, what a noble point of superiority this is to the state of the persons around you, however gay, young, or prosperous, who yet would feel horror-struck at the idea of death. Let this great concern of being ready, habitually ready, for death be our foremost every day and every hour, and then life may take its chance. How little has he to fear, who does not fear to die! Be this then always the first and foremost, and then let the other matters come as they may, or as they please. I say let them come as they may; and I say this with a much better grace than if all were gay and prosperous in my own life and prospects; but I was born with an unchangeable tendency to melancholy, and shall probably never want actual causes for it. As for instance, though my eyes have for the last year and more, been more easy and sound than several years before, yet the infallible symptoms that they will at length be darkened, gradually and steadily, and of late more perceptibly, increase. Before I left Chichester a light streak of cloud began to pass before them. This cloud has been increasing in size ever since, and by enlarging still a few years more, will bring a total eclipse. It is entirely beyond the reach of any medical application. I have this darkness, therefore, fully in prospect. Again, two or three years since the gland in front of my neck began to swell; it has continued to swell in spite of every remedy, and very rapidly since I came to this town, in consequence of the greater effort necessary to speak

within the wide walls; if during a few months more I find it still increase, it will be absolutely necessary to give over preaching, and that for ever; for every professional man agrees that the complaint cannot, in a person of my age, be cured; all that can be done will be to endeavour to check its progress, and I have now scarcely any hope that this can be done while I continue to preach. I have therefore the expectation that not long hence I must lose this mean of doing some little good, and this source of support. As to my matrimonial hopes, if this threatened event takes place, those hopes are deferred indefinitely, and perhaps for ever; unless the business of authorship should prove more lucrative than I have any clear right to expect. Thus you see I make out some right to talk to you in the strain of consolation. I say to you again, Let us live for God and eternity, and then let *Time* do as it pleases. But yet even as to time, with all its evils, if we are really the servants of the Almighty he will make things work together for our good, and we shall one day thank him with emotions of rapture for all the pains which he has mingled in our lot.

L. TO THE REV. JOHN FAWCETT.

Frome, May 23, 1805.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—It is altogether in vain to attempt any excuse for answering a letter from a friend fifteen or sixteen months after it was received. I can only wish that the condemnation may fall on the right point of the character, and that excessive indolence, or any thing else, may be imputed, rather than the want of a sincere and ever-constant regard. I own it rests simply on my assertion that this has not been the cause of my long silence, which would in no part of the world be deemed a proof of friendship. But I have my own consciousness that the permanence of friendly regard depends in my mind on the estimates of my judgment, and that you hold the same place in my judgment now, when the delusions of youth are passed away. The valued associate of some of the most interesting years

of my life, will be very often recalled to thought and affection, even to its latest periods. And I trust that both our lives, through whatever scenes they may separately pass, will be distinguished by that piety which will conduct them to close in the same point,—an entrance into the kingdom of social and eternal felicity. It appears to me a very long time since our walks and conversations at Brearley; the memory however of that period is still extremely vivid, and I am persuaded will always remain so. How many particular moments, places, incidents, and dialogues, I could recount. If I were with you I should feel it very interesting to spend a few hours in comparing our recollections, especially in a visit to the very places to which those recollections would refer. It is not improbable that I, though my memory is a very defective one, should have the stronger traces of those conversations and incidents, from this cause, that a person who leaves a place, and who has consequently no later associations with it to obliterate the earlier ones, looks back through a clearer medium, so to speak, to a former period, and to the circumstances of the place where he then lived. In that direction of his thoughts nothing seems to stand between him and the distant object. You, on the contrary, have passed through a long series of events and social communications in the same neighbourhood, and these would be found to occupy and crowd the latter part of your retrospect so much as probably to render the remoter circumstances much less distinct. I wonder which of us feels to have undergone the greater change by the course of time. It seems to me hardly possible that you should more emphatically feel yourself a different person from what you were twelve or fourteen years since, than I do. And yet one great circumstance in your situation which is not in mine, your domestic relation, would seem sufficient of itself to change almost the whole economy of feeling. In this great article I find it quite impossible to imagine to myself the nature of the new order of sentiments, and the manner in which they must take place of what was the general habit of feeling before. I can however very easily conceive your tender relations to form an estimable source of happiness, on which I can cordially congratulate you, while I think of you as

passing your life habitually with a friend who loves you, and whom you love, and surrounded by a number of rising beings (how many?) in whom you are destined to take a most affectionate interest to the last moment of your life. How far does your happiness, with the aid of these interests, exceed what you can imagine it possible to have attained without them? May I suppose that you are *twice* as happy as you could have been in the insulated state to which I am still condemned? But even a lower supposition than this will give me cause to commiserate my own destiny thus far. When that destiny may change is beyond even conjecture. My situation in this respect would be altered in a very short time, if worldly circumstances gave me any prospect of competence; but slender and precarious means, in times like the present, doom a man to bear his solitude as well as he can. I have a thousand times felt a vain regret on this subject, not only on account of being precluded from one of the capital means of felicity, and even of improvement, but also on account of the effect which I can perceive this exclusion to have on my character. It assists a very strong tendency which I feel to misanthropy.

I have long been taught and compelled by observation to form a very bad opinion of mankind; this conviction is irresistible; but at the same time I am aware of the Christian duty of cultivating a benevolence as ardent as if the contrary estimate of human character were true. I feel it most difficult to preserve anything like this benevolence; my mind recoils from human beings, excepting a very few, into a cold interior retirement, where it feels as if dissociated from the whole creation. I do not, however, in any degree approve this tendency, and I earnestly wish and pray for more of the spirit of the Saviour of the world.

Of my studies I cannot give you any account. As far as I have attended to any thing which could at all deserve that name, it has been in the most desultory manner imaginable. I have never yet succeeded in forming or adhering to any kind of plan or system. For many years past I have read comparatively but little,—a neglect which I feel daily and hourly cause to regret, and which very lately I have begun in some degree to remedy, or rather

to reform. Observation of facts and of the living world, has perhaps, on some subjects, given me the feeling of having better materials for forming opinions than books could supply; but on very many of the greatest subjects books must be the principal instructors. I often mix together in the most confused manner the reading of books of quite opposite quality. As for instance, I lately read at the same time, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, and Baxter's *Account of his own Life and Times*. The work of Gibbon excites my utmost admiration; not so much by the immense learning and industry which it displays, as by the commanding intellect, the keen sagacity, apparent in almost every page. The admiration of his ability extends even to his manner of showing his hatred to Christianity, which is exquisitely subtle and acute, and adapted to do very great mischief, even where there is not the smallest avowal of hostility. It is to be deplored that a great part of the early history of the Christian Church was exactly such as a man like him could have wished. There is no doubt that in his hands, Fathers, Councils, and the ancient contests and mutual persecutions of Christian parties, take their worst form; but after every allowance for this historian's malignity, it is impossible not to contemplate with disgust and reprobation a great part of what the Christian world has been accustomed to revere. . . .

I have lately begun to read the works of Charles Leslie. Happening to see the old volumes in the library of an acquaintance, I recollected the very strong manner in which Dr. Johnson once spoke of this writer. I intend to read a large proportion of him with the most careful attention. From what I have seen thus far, I doubt if there be in our language a theological writer of greater talents in the field of argument. I am gratified in the extreme degree by his most decisive reasonings against the Deists. A great part of his works seems to be against the Deists, Socinians, and Jews. Some parts are in defence of the established church, which of course it is now very needless to read. He was very fierce against dissenters.

Your life, I have been informed, is most completely filled with employment, and I rejoice that the employment will be of high utility. . . . I hope the consciousness of this

utility, and, I may add, the temporal advantage, will alleviate, and in some imperfect [degree reward] the toil. For the supreme reward you must wait till another period. . . . I would express to your father in the strongest terms, the grateful [sense] which I shall never lose, of the advantages I derived from being his pupil. Each review of the progress of my mind (as far as I may be allowed to regard that progress as a course of improvement) recalls him to my memory as a wise and friendly preceptor, of whom I shall never cease to think with affection and veneration.

I am ashamed to revert to the old subject of authorship. It seems that you had heard more than a year since, that I was going to print a number of essays. I supposed so myself, as I had written enough at that time for a moderate volume. But on consideration I felt that one very long essay (on the subject of the Metropolis) would not be exactly the thing to appear in a first publication. I had therefore a good deal more to write to make a reasonable quantity; and when I began the critical revision (now as much as eight or nine months since), of the whole mass, I was confounded at the crudeness, feebleness, or inelegance, that met my sight in every page, and almost every paragraph. The revision and correction cost me, I really believe, as much labour as the whole previous composition, though composition is a task in which I am miserably slow. At length two volumes, 12mo., are nearly through the press, and would have been finished some time since, but for a general refusal of the printers to work without higher wages. . . . I am not very sanguine of success; for one thing, because there are other reasons than those of pure criticism, why no Review will probably praise me. If I should be successful, and if I become disabled for personal public services, I shall devote myself entirely to the business of writing. . . . The person to whom the letters which make the essays were addressed, is the female friend to whom my affections are irrevocably devoted. . . .

LI. TO MRS. GOWING.

Frome, August, 1805.

MY DEAR FRIEND— . . . I have numberless times wished to hear about you, and should have solicited you to write, but from knowing how much you dislike the task. I expected to have seen you before this time, and am amazed to think, that almost four months have elapsed since my last visit. How have you been, and what have you been doing since then? How strange it feels to me, that I who have lived years in your house and daily society, should not now be certain, whether you are in health, whether you have any determinate plans, whether the girls are with you, whether you are reconciled, for the time, to your house, and all the other things which I used so lately to know habitually, and which it would be at this moment an animated pleasure, or at least *interest* (for it would partly depend for being pleasure or not, on your being happy or not), to be able to learn. My dear friend, I feel that time does not at all lessen my regard for you; in every instance in my past experience, I have found a very little time of absence and distance from those with whom I had associated to be a very complete test of the kind, and degree, of my interest in them; if that interest has been slight, and caused merely by having associated with them, I have always found it sink away after a very short time; much less than a year's absence would annihilate it. But I retain for you as cordial a friendship as on the pensive day that I left your house. Believe me, my excellent friend, you are, and always will be dear to me. I would ask twenty questions about you, and your family, and your course of life, but that I cannot know for asking. But why will you not let me know? Surely it would not be so *very* severe a grievance for once to write part of a sheet. Surely you know, that *I* do not mind about letters not being written *fine*. And you do me extreme injustice if you do not believe, that any intelligence from you would be most welcome. . . . I rather expect to see your neighbourhood before the end of next month. My mode of life is much the same, month after month; I continue as much a recluse as I well can; the difficulty is to make this

recluse life a diligent one; I am almost despairing of ever being able to make my life any thing worth, whether alone or social. My mind seems for ever to carry about with it five hundred weight of earth, or lead, or some other heavy and useless material, which denies it all power of continued exertion. How much I could regret, that industry and all other virtues are not by the constitution of nature, as necessary and inevitable as the descent of water down a hill, and of all heavy bodies to the earth. There has indeed been a considerable quantity of mental hard exercise in manufacturing and finishing the essays lately published; but this exertion was all by bits and pieces, and I have acquired even *no degree* of any thing like a *habit* of strong exercise by the employment. I have kept for you one of a few copies which I had for something less than the regular price at which they are sold. The book is considerably less than, from the quantity of paper which it seemed to fill in writing, I had expected it to make when printed. I will bring you this when I come. I do not know at all in what manner the thing sells; I shall not, however, be much disappointed if I should gain by it a good deal less than a hundred thousand pounds. I am afraid you and I were not born to find traps for catching crowds of those wandering guineas and bank-notes with which some parts of this our earth seem to abound, and which some people, who do not seem so much wiser *any other way* than one's self, have such a wonderful knack of tricking into their possession.

. . . . I have done more justice to the beautiful season this year than in many former ones; for I have taken many solitary walks, and, with a book and pencil in my hand, have done my best to catch all the ideas, images, objects, and reflections, that the most beautiful aspects and scenes of nature could supply. I have felt it of some consequence to me, if I am to write again, to assemble as many natural facts and images as possible, to supply what may be called colours to writing. I must increase the stock, or else I shall soon be *out*, as I have expended a great deal of material on what is already written.

Into company I cannot actually take this book and pencil, but I endeavour to seize fast every remarkable

circumstance, and each disclosure of character that I witness, and then when I return to my room, they go by dozens into my book.

I keep to my text on the subject of forming new friendships; I am quite too old for it. When I see people good and sensible, I am glad of it for *their* sake, not for my own. . . .

LII. TO THE REV. DR. BYLAND.

Frome, August, 1805.

DEAR SIR,—I am ashamed that I have not sooner acknowledged your very friendly letter, which gratified me the more as the time in which it was written appeared to be actually *stolen* from the urgent claims of multiplied duties. My envy has been numberless times excited by thinking of your faculty of dispatching such a variety of literary and other business within the short space of each month; and I have often, very often, made you a lesson of mortification to my own incurable indolence. Yet I am still unwilling to confess to myself that it *is* incurable, and would hope that a sense of duty, especially when aided by some measure of success, will yet prevail to excite me to vigorous and persevering exertion. When the listlessness returns, I trust the recollection of your exhortations and approbation will not be found a slight stimulus, as assuredly it will be felt a very strong reproach. I sincerely wish to render what service I may to the best cause; and if what has already appeared shall in any degree have this effect, I would be thankful to Heaven. Vanity is not probably my besetting sin, though it were in vain to disavow the indwelling of too much of this part and proof of human depravity. But I have no reason to reckon on such success as should greatly elate this very despicable passion, even if it were more prevalent than it is in my mind; especially as I have reason to expect the censure or contempt of one class of professed Christians, and of the most popular of those things called *reviews*, which contribute so much to lead and determine public opinion. I shall not cease to pray for a pure Chris-

tian zeal, and for divine assistance, to do what little an individual *can* do in this unhappy world. Have you never been inclined to regret that you were not reserved to come into it in that future glorious age when there will be so little necessary of the *present* order of Christian duties,—the zealous opposition to iniquity and error?

I have been constantly gratified to hear of your good health, and very active and successful labours. May the prospect of the crown still animate those labours, and a gracious Providence long protract the health and vigour requisite for prosecuting them.

. . . . I felt a degree of exultation to hear at last of the purchase of the premises in Stokes Croft;* it is a very noble acquisition to the cause: and we cannot doubt of an effect resulting which will continue even to the end of time. What have we to pray for next, but that the church may become prolific of combined talent and piety, so that a very large number of young men may come forth qualified and animated, as agents of the divine power, to extend that kingdom which shall at length be extended, as to its space, over the earth; and, as to its duration, through eternity?

May we, my dear sir, and our friends, be the eternal witnesses and participants of its glory.

LIII. TO MRS. GOWING.

Frome, 1805.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have for several weeks past intended to write to you against the Sunday. . . . To this I am prompted by an affectionate regard for you, which time and absence do not diminish, and which I shall never lose. I am certain I shall never lose it, because I completely know the structure of my own mind, and know that I never lose any sentiment which is absolutely founded on the estimates of my judgment. And I hope I do not need to say to you again, that my estimate of you is very high. I must, however, observe to you, that I have many times been hurt by

* The present site of the Baptist College.

your seeming not to believe me sincere when expressing such an estimate. I have always been perfectly sincere when using even the strongest expressions that I have at any time used. It is true that a half-smiling manner has sometimes accompanied these expressions; but that was your fault; I can never help this manner, when I perceive that a person does not believe what I am saying. Do not then doubt my sincerity when I now assure you once more that I feel for you a very great degree of mingled respect and affection; and that you are one of the very small number of persons that I have ever known, whose affection I shall always be anxious to retain, and shall rejoice in every indication that it is not lessened nor lost.

Though I experience uniformly the utmost attention and respect from the family in whose house I am, I have never felt myself at home since I left your house. I never use the word *home* when speaking of, or returning to, the place of my residence. Whenever the word has occurred, my heart has rejected it, and recalled you, my dear friend, to my thoughts. With you I felt happy to pass a number of hours each day, till I felt the absolute necessity and duty of literary labour imposed on me, and that my extreme slowness of execution made all my time seem too little to do anything like what I wished. But even this allowed many pleasing social hours.

I wish you happy, my dear friend, and regret the unpleasant circumstances that attend you. Probably, however, your prospects include some things which in one way will be an alleviation. Allow me to urge you with great earnestness to secure the greatest possible measure of the highest order of consolations. How many thousand times I have resolved to cultivate personal religion, and especially that part of it which consists in the direct exercises of devotion, with a much more serious diligence. I am still making the same resolutions, and not without hope. I would entreat you also to adopt this great expedient for happiness. We perfectly feel (and no instructions can make us more clearly understand) that we shall be happy or not in proportion to the prevalence or the want of habitual devotion to the Almighty. We are perfectly convinced, too, that he will most certainly take a kind and parental care of *every* thing that

concerns even the temporal interests of those who are his devoted servants. Amidst the uncertainty of my prospects I often wish to feel the full value of this consolation. Do you also, my dear friend, have recourse to this noblest cause of hope.

.... What an immensity of beauty has spread over all your neighbourhood since I was there. I have walked very little since then, but have been delighted at every sight of a hedge, tree, or field. A few days since I walked to the top of a very high hill about four miles from here, and saw a vast and beautiful prospect on almost every side.

Having gone through the whole of my late literary job without the help of an English dictionary of any kind, I have just now received as a present, from I do not know whom nor where, Johnson's great dictionary, new and elegantly bound,—a book that must have cost, I suppose, four guineas. I am much obliged to them, whoever they are; and shall be so much the better provided for my next literary labours. I am beginning anxiously to consider what are to be the subjects of those labours, and do not yet know.

LIV. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Frome, August 20, 1805.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have received your two notes, as well as your letter. I repeat to you that I am very grateful for the animated activity with which you have promoted my interests; and yet, at the same time, I cannot but be sorry for the personal, detailed, and *unliterary* trouble which it must have cost to sell a hundred and forty books. I really ought not, and cannot wish, to tax your friendship so far.

Five hundred copies disposed of in so short time might, in the circumstances, be considered as an extraordinary success, if so much of it were not owing to a few friendly individuals. Allow me to suggest to you not to send, in any way, any *hastening* intimation to any of the Reviews. L—— paid a very good price for this kind of impatience.

In some of the Reviews, the later the notice and the

better. For which of them will Hall write his critique, if he do write one? Such a one as he would write would not be accepted in the Monthly, which *could* do one the greatest service, and which *will*, in all probability, do an injury. If a plausible character of the book appear in any other Review earlier than the notice in the Monthly, that notice will be so much the more spiteful on that account. I have a very clear perception of what that is in the style which your Socinian critic calls *pompous* and *affected*. It is a certain *kept up* formality, an artificial march of diction, which I have before called half-rhetorical. I wish it were possible to attain more ease and simplicity. As to praise and censure, whatever effect they may have on the feelings of vanity, they will have extremely little on my estimate of the book, or of the faculties which produced it; my own deliberate opinion is *too* deliberate to be raised or depressed. It were in vain to pretend that I do not feel so much of that mean passion which can be elated by applause, and mortified by the contrary, but there is nothing under heaven which I more sincerely and totally despise, and nothing which ever makes me so emphatically despise myself. I feel it infinitely despicable at the very moment that I feel it excited; and I hope by degrees to be substantially delivered from it. I have a thousand times been astonished that this mean feeling should not have been completely extirpated by the sincere and deliberate contempt which I have long entertained for human opinion—opinion I do not mean as regarding myself, but as regarding any other person or book. One cannot have lived thus long in the world without perceiving how little sterling sense there is among mankind, especially in regard to anything a little removed from the common ground of their business and attention. And then that which there is *never* operates simply, and unbiassed by circumstances tending to pervert it. How constantly everywhere one observes opinions to be the result of whim, of momentary impression, of partiality, of spite, or of adherence to a class; and to betray ignorance, incapacity, or inattention. There is neither affectation nor sagacity in these remarks; the truth of them is obvious to every attentive observer; and I have observed long enough to acquire a fixed contempt of the opinions of mankind. It

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is needless to say, that by mankind we mean the generality, including, when this estimate of their opinions is expressed, a very large proportion even of those who have received a considerable degree of cultivation.

Whatever degree of vanity, less or more, I may feel, there is another feeling which, in my present circumstances, is much more prevalent, and which I do *not* despise myself for even indulging, "*auri sacra fames.*"

A few corrections will be very necessary, yet I think the necessary are not many, and further than necessary it would be wrong to go, especially as the business must be to make *another* book, and not to be spending time and labour without end on this one. Some of the *obscure* passages are so from a kind of expression that may be mended; some appear so because the *sentiment* is recondite, and no form of words can make it plain to a reader who has not analogous sentiments of his own. I shall make corrective notes as they may occur to me. The grand fault in the fourth essay is the indefiniteness of the denomination, "Evangelical Religion," which I seem to use sometimes in a specific sense, and sometimes in the more general sense, tantamount to—*Christianity*. But this cannot be mended; at least, I do not see how, as it goes through the whole texture. It must even be let alone. I am not certain that I had a correct idea of what is meant by the Omnipotence of Truth; nor whether it is right to confound truth with *conviction* or persuasion, in the manner that I have done. I do not see that more religious references ought to have appeared in the essay on Decision, &c., as the object was merely to illustrate the *general* principles of this decision, as applicable to religious pursuits, or any other indifferently, and not to dwell, except very briefly, on *any* specific form of the operation of these principles. And besides, I think the volumes have quite a competent measure, on the whole, of what belongs to religion, such a measure, that any considerable addition would have given the appearance of a specifically religious book, which would not have been the best policy, either for usefulness or literary success. I am glad of Wilberforce's approbation.

.... I shall reckon on seeing you both in Bristol and here; and if it will really be of any use for me to visit Lon-

don, I should prefer returning with you from the west. To do it just now, would seem as if I were very eager to get a little flattery, which I really am not, and which there is no need for me to appear to want. . . .

It is probable, that what I recollect to have said some time since, about the continuance of my preaching, appeared to you only a casual or exaggerated expression; and I have felt little inclined to repeat the simple and absolute fact, that I shall not be able to preach any great while longer; this is now become more certain than when I first said it. It is no matter of *apprehension*, but a thing entirely decided. . . . It is not my *throat* now that causes me any inconvenience; *that* has been perfectly well a long time; the complaint is a formidable swelling of the gland that passes across the front of the neck, which cannot be reduced, and which, in this enlarged state, presses with a weight and constriction on the moving parts that are constantly in action in speaking; and the effort is at once very uneasy, sometimes quite painful, and causes a continual increase of the evil. Even *talking* a great deal, for several hours in company, becomes very oppressive as well as injurious; and I look forward with dread, mingling with the pleasure to the whole days which I may spend with you some time hence. Lately I spent almost a whole day with Sibree, Williams of Westbury, and another of the fraternity; and though much pleased with the company, the evening became extremely oppressive, from this physical cause, and the escape into silence by our separation was an exquisite luxury. I am probably destined, through the whole of life, to be under the necessity of restraining the copiousness of expression, even in the easy talk of domestic society. A grand advantage which I promise myself from this is, to acquire, from necessity, the art of putting more thought in fewer words—an inestimable art, for a writer especially. My regret for the preclusion from the possible utility of preaching is considerably consoled by the hope, that I may be able to render much greater services to the best Master, and the best Cause, by writing. Viewed in regard to my personal interests, this is a melancholy dispensation. . . . I cannot see any reason for your relinquishment of literary purposes. With the amendment, so often noted already, you will write

vigorously and elegantly. We must both endeavour to do something that will speak a little while at least, after we are finally silent. Keep yourself in the exercise, with a particular reference to the points where modification is desirable. . . .

LV. TO MRS. R. MANT.

Frome, November 22, 1805.

. . . . During the summer I several times intended to have written again; but really I was not born under the writing planets, whichever they may be. It occurred to me sometimes, that it was but too probable you were again suffering that severe headache which has before so much lessened to you the value of the delightful season,—delightful to a person in health. Yet, as I do not remember to have ever known a summer with so little oppressive heat, I am willing to persuade myself that you have not suffered quite so much as in former seasons. If you did not, you would be delighted with the extraordinary beauty which prevailed throughout the entire season; there was never a parching and scorching interval; the verdure never died, nor hardly even languished. I never have been more enchanted with a summer, since I left whatever part of creation or chaos I lived in, in former ages, and came to this our green orb. I took frequent solitary walks, even as matter of duty I did it sometimes, when the attraction of pleasure might have failed to overcome my great indisposition to move. These walks were commonly in the retired fields and woody lanes, of which I found a number this last summer in this neighbourhood, some of them very beautiful, as well as extremely quiet. There are, besides, two or three extremely beautiful valleys not far from this town. As to the town itself, I do not know whether I told you how much I nauseate it; but no length of time would ever cure my loathing of it. But sweet Nature! I have conversed with her with inexpressible luxury; I have almost worshipped her. A flower, a tree, a bird, a fly, has been enough to kindle a delightful train of ideas and emotions, and some-

times to elevate the mind to sublime conceptions. When the autumn stole on I observed it with the most vigilant attention, and felt a pensive regret, to see those forms of beauty which tell that all the beauty is going soon to depart. One autumnal flower (the white convolvulus) excited very great interest, by recalling the season I spent at Chichester, where I happened to be very attentive to this flower, and once or twice, if you recollect, endeavoured to draw it with the pencil. I have at this moment the most lively image of my doing this, and of the delight I used to feel in looking at this beautiful flower in the hedges of those paths and fields with which you and I are both so well acquainted. Yes, *I* am well acquainted; though it is now beginning to be long since my wanderings and musings there; yet I could most promptly find each field, each path, each gate, each corner, each stile. . . . I could tell where I formed plans, indulged pensive regrets for the waste of past life, made pious resolutions, or let my fancy run into visionary reveries. All this is out of your house; I need not say how well I recollect the circumstances, conversations, readings, &c., which took place in the house. I shall always be partial to the recollection of that house; to the pictures which gave a kind of life to the walls; to the pretty vine which crept in at my window;—and all this chiefly for the sake of the inhabitant—who, I conclude, is the inhabitant still, though I have left it so long. While she continues in it, may the greatest Being in the universe continually visit her there. I am well assured she will continually crave his society, and I know, too, that he loves to receive and accept such invitations. . . .

LVI. TO D. PARKEN, ESQ.*

Frome, November 20, 1806.

DEAR SIR,—Your letter seems to require to be answered some time, and the present may be as proper a time as

* In reference to Mr. Foster's critique on Forbes's *Life of Beattie*, inserted in the *Eclectic Review* for January and February, 1807, "Contributions," &c., vol. I. pp. 19—36.

any other. The writer of an article in a Review is apprised, of course, of the conditions under which he writes it. He knows that the editor is responsible for the whole publication, and that he must necessarily be the judge and arbiter of both the whole and the parts of every piece that is supplied and submitted to him. The writer, therefore, surrenders it at discretion, to be modified as the occasion requires, and abandons it to its chance without taking any further interest or care about it as his *own*. This is no doubt one cause, as I have seen some writer observe, that few pieces, comparatively, of good writing will be likely to appear in reviews, since the writer will seldom make much effort about what is merely to serve its temporary purpose, and be no further an object of his care after he has sent it out of his hands. This, however, is the condition under which he writes, and his business is to keep himself perfectly indifferent in what manner his pages may be put in print. All this I knew, and therefore need not disavow the remotest wish to interfere in any way with the province and authority of the editor. After the piece is printed, and indeed after these few lines, I shall not make the smallest remark or complaint.

As you have made some remarks and exceptions however, I will here say a few words in the person of the writer of the piece.

And, in the outset, I do not believe there is one sentence too much in the spirit of censure or satire. It may be all very true about Sir William's good qualities, among his friends; but here he comes forth before the public with a great book. In the first place, this book is quite unnecessary, as there was a fully long enough account of Dr. Beattie before published; and if it *had* been necessary, it is far too big for the subject, unless, as I have said, all proportion and modesty, as to the extent of record claimed by individuals, are to be set at defiance. This is, besides, becoming a *custom*, and Hayley has played the penny-and-book-making game with a vengeance. This book is eked out with very many very insignificant letters, with leaf after leaf of fac-similes, with analyses of books, with long stories about the union of colleges, and with an immense quantity of miscellaneous heraldic biography and gene-

alogy. In the next place, unless all the rules by which we judge of men in their conversation are to be reversed, when we are to judge of so much of their characters as they voluntarily choose to display in their books, there never was a greater excess of ostentation on the part of the author than in this book. It is impossible not to know what judgment we should form, as to this point, of a man who, alluding in the course of his conversation to many distinguished personages, should always take care to let us know that these persons were his old familiar acquaintance, when there was no other use in the information, and no need to give it. It appears evident to me, that not a few of these short pieces of biography and genealogy were introduced for the very purpose of telling, that the author was acquainted with one distinguished personage more. And if this is not the case, and all this is done in sheer simplicity, the reviewer cannot be exculpated for letting go, without castigation, an instance of such weakness as would be made a precedent of unbounded ostentation and egotism. Sir W. takes care to tell, that much stronger things in the way of compliment were in Dr. Beattie's letters to him, but that he has left them out; and this is said to apologize for those strong things which are retained. Why, in the name of decency, were they not *both* omitted? Or, if this could not be done without actually destroying the texture of the letters, why were the letters printed at all? Who wanted the letters, or can be benefited by them? And besides, unless he had intimated that the emolument from the book would, at least in part, be applied to some other than personal use, does not the whole affair look like his raising money by showing strangers the monument of his friend?

Again; the correspondence is most obviously crammed with excess of praise and mutual flattery. Here my eye glances on your remark, that "every body is made splenetic by every body else's praise." This may be true enough, but what has it to do with the subject? The reviewer may be prompted by spleen, and half a dozen more such virtues, but this is nothing to the *public*; the question is only, whether his allegation is just, that is, whether it is true; and surely the present case is out of

all doubt. *Are* not the correspondents habitually larding and daubing one another with flattery from head to foot, and next, all their acquaintance? *Is* not every virtue, every accomplishment, and every talent almost, constantly attributed to each other and all who were their friends, while at the very same time we know that many of them were just no better than they should be? Even the late miserable Archbishop — is liberally bepraised, of whom I happen to know specific facts that prove him one of the meanest muckworms that ever crawled into a mitre. Sir W. describes *James Boswell* as a man of “fervent devotion”!!! These are his identical words, and I should have cited them in the critique, but because I thought it could not be done without requiring to be accompanied with some expression of such emphatical censure or contempt as would be absolute rudeness. They all join with one consent in the profoundest sorrow on account of the profane and frivolous Garrick, who was however one of the best of human beings. As to the lavish excesses of encomium on Dr. B. and his writings, let it be recollected that there were many contemporary writers of even greater fame, and that they, it is to be presumed, had also their friends who wrote to them and of them in the very same style. Now only imagine that the correspondence of and concerning each of them were to be published, after this edifying example,—what is to become of us *then*, or of modesty, decency, or sense? What a nauseous inundation of fulsome folly we should have to wade, swim, or drown, in. And why should not this be done in every instance? There would be the same right. Now is a critic, because he is called Eclectic, and is an excellent good Christian, to let all this pass, as a display of the amiable feelings of friends for one another, as Sir W. would have it understood? Or is he even to praise it, as I dare say some of the Reviews have done, though I have not seen one of them? Or if he blames it, is he to do this in a dull quotation from Tillotson’s Sermons, or in the feebleness of a few milk-and-water phrases? If friends choose to write in this style to and of one another, let them; the critic is not bound to keep in his pay scoundrels to rob the mails in order to come at their letters; but if these are all to be published,

I think he is bound by every law of public decorum to indict the nuisance.

Then as to the *royal conversation, as what, and for what*, is it to be introduced? *As* a specimen of royal wisdom,—or *for* an attempt to coax the public, by an overdone loyalty, to take in the Review? This would seem much of a piece with the awkward and laborious loyalty by which the dissenters have of late years disgraced themselves in many of their publications. It however loses, as it deserves to lose, its reward. A spirited, independent, critical work may easily throw off this, without on the other hand dashing into faction. Can there be a more fair object of satire than that pomp and importance which a literary man assumes, and his friends for him, on account of his having talked with. . . . *a king*? It appears to me quite time of the day to show that we are not to be gulled into admiration of his sublime fortune. It would be difficult to show this *seriously* without an air of faction; dry, calm satire, therefore, is the only resource. . . .

On the whole, then, I am entirely of the opinion with which I began (and it is quite in character for any kind of writer to be of this opinion concerning any thing he has written, if it were even but a paragraph in a newspaper), that if one sarcastic or condemnatory sentence is softened and neutralized, it will be so much spoiled, not simply in respect of writing, but of *justice*. Better turned sarcasms or censures may be easily invented, but if the writing is reduced *out* of satire and *out* of censure, it is destroyed as a review.

The Eclectic wants a greater proportion of this class of writing; I do not say like *my* specimens, but of this general quality. There are a good many exceptions, and I verily believe these are from the pen of the editor; but the greater part falls under the heavy censure of literary men (without whose approbation no *literary* work can prosper) as defective in spirit, freedom, and poignancy. I have heard a good many of them talk of the subject; and what they say is, that the Review *dares* nothing; that its highest ambition seems to be to do no harm; that it takes the style of a puritan divine in some instances where that of Voltaire would be better; that it is too anxious to preserve a quiet impunity,

under the wings of orthodoxy and loyalty ; that it is like a dog that has been whipped, and therefore but just ventures to growl, and then runs away. . . . &c., &c.

I should not forget to allude to the parts of the article in question which relate to the pecuniary assistance deemed necessary to Dr. Beattie, and to the niece of Mrs. Cockburn, and these passages *ought* to be bitter, whether they are or not. Nothing can possibly be too acrid for the occasions. One recollects the cases of Burns, Bloomfield, &c., but those in question are much more legitimate cases for the lash.

Here is a man of moderate economical prudent habits, a deep student, a diligent lecturer, an useful writer, and an amiable man,—who is in circumstances hardly affording, or securing the permanence of, the comforts of life ; and there are a very great number of affluent, literary, titled, and most affectionate dear friends, and Sir William among them, who are *wishing*, and *wishing*, and *wishing*, that some little matter could be done for him, while they are rolling, many of them, in luxury and splendour. That *his* delicacy would not have refused their generosity, is evident from the animated gratitude he expressed for Mrs. Montague's hint. And here again is a desolate widow of extraordinary worth and endowments, *who is actually known to, and visited by a great number of persons of distinction, and particularly the Duchess of Gordon, who yet lives dozens of years in a state next to absolute want*,—and yet these persons' knowing her is mentioned by Sir W. with the utmost complacency!!! Now if a Review can pass quietly over all this as all very good and pretty, or just only make some innocent insipid remark upon it, that Review deserves to perish.—I have no more to add, but that having thus told my mind, I shall not make the slightest complaint whatever alteration is made, and that I remain,

Yours respectfully,
J. FOSTER.

LVII. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Frome, January 21, 1807.

. . . . I am writing to Paternoster Row for a whole set of the Edinburgh Review. It is a work essential to the library of a literary man. My own experiments in reviewing make me more distinctly feel the measure of talent evinced in that work, a work though of very bad tendency as to religion.

. . . . You saw the stupid article about the Essays in the Monthly Review. . . . The Edinburgh will not take any notice. . . . I have been struck at seeing how much the truth of the last essay is evinced by the very manner in which all the reviews, excepting the one or two specifically religious, have noticed that essay. Even the candid and plausible ones have considered it as the worst part of the book,—a kind of appendage of subordinate material which had better have been omitted.

For the last three months nearly I have been keeping myself to work with great seclusion, and a tolerable degree of application,—a very meritorious application, since it has been a dogged self-compulsion; for all the labour has been *invitâ Minervâ*. Yes, I have almost every day felt it an ungracious and unsuccessful task,—ungracious in a great measure from its being unsuccessful. Almost the only exception to this description was in one or two of the days in which I wrote the critique on Sir W. Forbes, which I did with a facility which I have never felt since. In part I attribute the sterility and inert cast of thought to the dreary influence of winter; and I am warranted to do this, from having always felt the effect of this influence since I had any thing to do with studying and writing. Johnson may say what he pleases, but I know, and have long known, as to myself, that there is a very great difference, in the powers of imagination at least, between winter and the spring and autumn. On this account I regretted that my London dissipation should fall in such a way as to alienate the finest part of autumn from the business of composition. The two or three first weeks after my return hither I felt the most extreme repugnance to go to work, and had also as another prevention, a num-

ber of visits to make. After these two or three weeks thus spent, I flagellated myself in great anger, and drove myself to work, and have kept at it ever since, with the occasional interruption of a day, which has been lost, perhaps, from some visiting parson spoiling the morning, which, during these short days, is incomparably the best part. By sheer hard labour I have worked out perhaps twice as much as I ever did within the same number of weeks before, but hardly one page has appeared to me to be done well. I have worked under the feeling that I must not wait for more auspicious times, but, good or bad, must absolutely produce something. The subject also is unfavourable,* as being of a wide and common-place nature, just as well admitting one thing to be said as another, and all resting on a few main principles so perfectly trite and obvious, that it is excessively difficult to give the smallest appearance of point or novelty. As to fine figures, not one of them ever comes near me. I never before thought and wrote so much with half so few images. The *utility* of the business will be the only consolation. Of *that* I cannot altogether fail. There is no hope of getting to an end in less than perhaps three months; for the truth is, that I had written hardly any thing before I returned hither from London. A number of sheets full of mere topics and hints indeed, but no composition. I see no chance that the thing will be much less than the whole of the four essays together.

LVIII. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Frome, March 12, 1807.

. . . . My having transferred my residence to a different house, together with a deluge of new entertainment rushing upon me in the form of the *Edinburgh Review*, and several other things, has made a deplorable chasm in my sentence-making for more than a month past. But I must and will be at it again from this day forward. I am quite ashamed to see how much the days are lengthened since I

* On the Improvement of Time.

did any thing material to the business. It will not, however, be quite in vain to have read a large portion of this terrible Review; a work probably superior to every thing of the kind for the last century, every thing since Bayle's time. I read it with abhorrence of its tendency as to religion, but with admiration of every thing else. It cannot fail to have a very great effect on the literary world, by imperiously requiring a high style of intellectual performance, and setting the example. It is most wonderful how a parcel of *young* men have acquired such extensive and accurate knowledge, and such a firm, disciplined, unjuvenile habit of thinking and composing. But I shall not be made believe that they have not an old fox or two among them. Yet they all admirably support the general level of able performance. The belles-lettres critics seem to be stocked with logic as well as principles of taste, and the scientific critics to be fraught with satire as well as definitions. Either their modesty or their pride keeps them almost clear of any direct attention to theology, but their incidental references are detestable and pernicious. It may not seem very consistent after this to insist that you must have this work, from the beginning, and so must or ought every other intellectual and literary man: he cannot pretend to have a competent library without it. . . .

LIX. TO JOSEPH COTTLE, ESQ.

[In answer to an invitation to meet S. T. Coleridge.]

Frome, June, 1807.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am very unfortunate in having made an engagement two or three weeks back, to go just at this time on a very particular occasion, to a distant place in this county, and therefore being deprived of the very high luxury to which you so kindly invite me. I shall be unavoidably detained for a very considerable time, and my imagination will strongly represent to me the pleasure and advantage of which an inevitable necessity deprives me. But I will indulge the hope, that I shall sometime be known to Mr. Coleridge, under more favourable circumstances in a literary respect, than I can at present, after a regular application to

'the severer order of studies shall in some measure have retrieved the consequences of a very loose and indolent intellectual discipline, and shall have lessened a certain feeling of imbecility which always makes me shrink from attempting to gain the notice of men whose talents I admire.

No man can feel a more animated admiration of Mr. Coleridge than I have retained ever since the two or three times that I was a little while in his company; and during his absence in the south and the east, I have very often thought with delight of the immense acquisitions which he would at length bring back to enrich the works which I trust the public will in due time receive from him, and to which it has an imperious claim. And still I trust he will feel the solemn duty of making his very best and continued efforts to mend as well as delight mankind, now that he has attained the complete mastery and expansion of his admirable powers. You do not fail, I hope, to urge him to devote himself strenuously to literary labour. He is able to take a station amongst the most elevated ranks, either of the philosophers or the poets. Pray tell me what are his *immediate* intentions, and whether he has any important specific undertaking in hand. For the sake of elegant literature, one is very glad, that he has had the opportunity of visiting those most interesting scenes and objects which you mention. Will you express to him in the strongest terms my respect, and my animated wishes for his health, his happiness, and his utility? You can inform me what is the nature of that literary project to which you allude. Tell me also, what is the state and progress of your own literary projects, and I hope I may say labours.

I behaved shabbily about some slight remarks which I was to have ventured on Mr. Southey's *Madoc*. On reading the critiques of the *Edinburgh Review* on *Thalaba* and *Madoc*, I found what were substantially my own impressions, so much better developed than I could have done, that I instantly threw my remarks away. Let me hear from you when you have half an hour of leisure, and believe me to be, with every kind remembrance to your most excellent family, my dear sir,

Most cordially yours,

JOHN FOSTER.

LX. TO MRS. B. MANT.

Frome, July 18, 1807.

. . . . In the article of *society* I know you are unfortunate, and have long been so. Even if the persons near you would be friendly, they would yield you but a very defective satisfaction, their tastes are in general so very different from yours. Though you would sometimes be gay, you would not be frivolous, and though you would be gay *sometimes*, yet you would wish to be often serious. . . . A time will come, when you will know why it was appointed you to walk to a better state and better society through a path so desolate and solitary. That it is appointed by infinite wisdom and goodness your faith is well assured, though it is perhaps unavoidable for the heart sometimes to feel sad. Women that pass through life without forming any domestic connections are sometimes, perhaps generally, left more solitary than others when they advance towards its latter part. But yet what circumstances of vexation and wretchedness they escape. This remark I am led to make by a fact that has happened in this town this very morning. A middle-aged woman, a widow, who has always borne a respectable character, has cut her throat, and is dead, owing, as it is said, to the vexation occasioned her by two wicked sons. Think of this, my dear friend, and consider how much better is a situation like yours, in a social respect, than one so miserable as to lead to such a catastrophe. I could wish you, what perhaps you cannot have, excellent, cheerful, and social friends; but I still more wish you, what you *can* have, much of the society of that supremely beneficent Being, who is able to make you a compensation, both here and hereafter, for all that he at present sees it proper to refuse you.—Let me once again exhort you, while I would admonish myself also, to be much in the exercise of making your requests known to the Almighty. It is the greatest of all consolations upon earth. . . . My father and mother are still living, but very infirm; the former being I believe as much as eighty-two years of age, and the latter about seventy-five. My brother, who is a number of years younger than myself, has three or four children. . . .

LXI. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Frome, January, 1808.

MY DEAR FRIEND, I am sitting in the midst of authors, in the office of Minos; a pack of scoundrels they are; infidels to a man, both small and great. Just now I am about the vile pamphlet of Scott Waring (as I am told), called, "Observations," &c. I repeat to you, this is a most excellent mode of mental and preparatory exercise; and I feel very sensibly that I acquire a stronger hand, and a more comprehensive view, by means of it. Once more, therefore, I exhort you to join in the same good cause. For a good while past I have quite neglected any other composition; and probably shall do so now till quite into the fine days of spring, which, spite of Johnson, is far more favourable to original thinking, and the rich play of imagination, than this chill and dreary season, with its fogs, snows, and endless nights. The authorship will be all the better, when I set to it in earnest, from this diversified exercise; in which I continually am made to feel a humiliating debility, and a prodigious ignorance. Often I am perhaps too willing to impute the former to the latter. Both will lessen by the continuance of discipline. The removal to Bourton will rather harden than slacken this discipline. Our plan is that of a mutually very hard life. My Maria rejoices in this prospect, and will be an estimable companion and prompter and participator of improvement. She regrets the indolence and mental lassitude of her past life as much as I do of mine; and, for conscience' sake, for pleasure's sake, for utility's sake, and for each other's sake, we shall adopt a plan by which we shall hope to make the improvement of our united life equal to its tenderness. . . .

LXII. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Frome, February 15, 1808.

. . . . Coleridge was lately in Bristol, and Cottle wrote to me to say they two had been on the point of visiting me at Frome, but that Cottle's lameness had decided them

rather to ask me to go to Bristol. It was impossible for me to do this at the time, without putting off the review of Scott Waring to a later number of the *Eclectic*, which P. had earnestly deprecated, and for what were obviously good reasons. I was compelled therefore to decline it, and wrote to Cottle to express my highest respect to Coleridge, and my hope that I might sometime perhaps better deserve to be acquainted with the great genius.

Coleridge has some project of a new review, it seems, on which Cottle says he wished to talk with me, having heard, I suppose, that I am a decent journeyman, as the business in general goes. Have you attended any of his lectures at the Royal Institution? Cottle says he is very greatly improved as to the religious part of the character of his mind, and that really he is even substantially *orthodox*, as well as a believer in Christianity in the general. I do not suppose he will have the requisite perseverance for giving full effect to a review, if it should ever be commenced.

. . . . Once more I tell you to become a reviewer; it will fling your diction abroad into variety and freedom. It is the best writing discipline in the world. If that there Coleridge should really begin, we will now and then get to be of his gang. . . . You must not think of leaving this dusty planet without first writing a valuable and a fine book or two; but in order to this you must get more freedom of diction, and this reviewing is the very thing. . . .

LXIII. TO MISS B——.

Frome, February 15, 1808.

. . . I shall always recollect with most grateful pleasure the very large contribution to the interest and felicity of my life which has been derived from your family during a number of years past, and which I trust will, at successive times be derived again; for I should leave this place with a melancholy feeling if I did not promise myself that I shall sometimes, wherever I may be placed, see you in visits of not a short duration to me and my Maria. . . . I do not regard it as likely that we shall continue, if life is prolonged,

any very long time at Bourton. It is very much too far from any grand scene of human society and knowledge to be adapted to the kind of life to which I am necessarily and permanently devoted. It is not, as you well know, that I want to be very much in various society, but I want the means of *knowing* and seeing with facility many things which are to be known and seen only in, or in the neighbourhood of, very large towns. The neighbourhood of Bristol would please me better than almost any other place; and if we should become residents there, it would be a thing of perfect ease to see you, even frequently. Meanwhile you must endeavour to think it worth while to visit Bourton. Our residence there for a short time—say for two or three years—if life should continue, may very well suit for the kind of improvement and attainment which I am most defective in, and most determined to endeavour to acquire.

I am glad you have met with so many things and persons that have given you pleasure or improvement. In Coleridge you saw one of the highest class of human beings, with respect to combination of talents, and I am exceedingly glad to learn from Mr. C. that he is much more firmly established in the principles of religion than at any former period of his life; he is, as Mr. C. tells me, in a very great degree even *orthodox*. If this were *previous* to his being exposed to all the causes which contribute to pervert human genius, one should be less assured of its value; but it is very gratifying when this is the state of such a mind after travelling over Europe, associating with wits and infidel philosophers, and being exposed to the influence of a thousand things tending to lead such a mind into an oblivion or rejection of Christian truth. I wonder he should have maintained a theory on the subject of taste, which, as you observe, there are such a multitude of facts to confute. I shall be very glad to hear you personally tell all that you observed, heard, or thought, in attending his lecture.

The friend to whom you refer has been, since you saw her, transferred by a greater Friend to a happier region, from which affection could not for one moment wish to recall her to a life of suffering. That suffering no doubt

was intended, and has conduced to qualify her for the sublime scene and society to which she has been called. It will be very consolatory to you in reflection to have seen her, to have soothed her affliction, and to have witnessed her preparation for the superior abodes. You will combine the two ideas, of what she was, and what she is, in a more affecting manner, and when some of the pensiveness of thought is removed by time, in a more pleasing manner, than you would have been able to do if you had not seen her once more before the change. I earnestly hope, that whoever shall be appointed to precede us, or to follow us, in the transition to another life, we shall exercise incessant solicitude and diligence, that we may not fail to be added in due time to the best and happiest beings in the universe.

When you return hither you will probably find the generality of persons and things much in the same state as when you left them. . . . As to myself, I am solitary still, with the exception of the interesting hours which I pass at your house, and a very occasional visit to a few other houses. Sometimes, from a species of absolute force, I am very industrious for a week or two, and then I relapse into musing indolence, or the most desultory and useless kind of reading. Reviewing has been the chief part of any thing I could call labour for a good while past, and I find it an extremely advantageous mode of literary exertion, as to its effect in strengthening the power of comprehension and vigorous expression. In this respect I am sensible of a gradual, though slow, improvement of the intellectual powers and operation. I most sincerely promise myself to improve much faster in a given space of time when I have an interesting domestic associate, whose congenial taste and solicitude not to live in vain will often inspire a degree of animation into important pursuits, which it is impossible almost to maintain in the cold listlessness of habitual solitude. My estimable associate expects a very *hard life*, in regard to mental exertion, and she loves to expect it, both as forming a dignified basis of social interest, and as strongly adapted to her own improvement, not to mention that such an occupation of social time will materially contribute to facilitate the prosecution of a business which is to be in part the source of competence, and may

also obtain a little for beneficence, and may effect a little for public utility.

. . . I cannot, my dear friend, have lived so long in this world, without acquiring the painful knowledge that all human hopes are subject to a degree of disappointment; for this to some certain extent, both myself and M. are pensively prepared; but we do uniformly think, that if Providence shall be benign, we have a rational prospect of a greater measure of felicity (but it seems almost presumption for an inhabitant of the earth to use such a word) than we generally see in married life, and that this felicity will be of a finer quality. We do not forget, that in some way or other it is the inevitable lot of mortality to experience sorrow, but we *do* hope we cannot be fated to regard each other as the cause of it.

I have just received Mr. Cottle's new poem, "The Fall of Cambria," in two duodecimos, and have read a little, from which I think it must be a pleasing work; you can mention it, if any one asks you to name a new book for a reading society.

LXIV. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Frome, March 3, 1808.

. . . Yes, the spring does open upon me with a fascination which I have not felt before, notwithstanding that I have often felt a kind of worship of nature, on the return of that delightful season with its flowers, birds, and genial gales. This once I certainly do feel in its first indications a deeper charm than I did even in my youth, when I was as full of fancy and sentiment as any poet. For several years I have been much less susceptible of the vernal impressions, and have considered myself as advancing fast toward the state of feeling which I recollect P. a few years since described himself to me as having reached, the state of feeling no impression at all. And no doubt it is from the new and adventitious cause, that I have felt such luxury in the beautiful days, which we have had for a week past.

I am glad of your concurrence in opinion as to the high

value, for domestic interest, of associated intellectual employments. This anticipation is both to me and my Maria supremely gratifying, as furnishing at all events, a perfect security against *ennui*, and the waste of time,—as involving and even necessitating, the improvement of both our minds,—as improving them in *the same direction*, so as to make the individual attainments interchangeable, and so to speak mutually recognisable,—as tending to promote our highest interests,—as giving scope for great diversification in the indulgence of tenderness,—and as essentially conducing to our ordinary temporal means;—to a certain extent, I may perhaps add, as tending to effect a little public usefulness.

. . . We are most powerfully convinced, that no mistake could be more fatal than that of the uncalculating persons who in forming such an union, place their *whole* reliance on affection and its indulgences. This is the wretched mistake commonly made by very young persons, and which I myself was not incapable of having made at that age. For many years past, however, I have been too wise. . . *

* “Next to the divine favour, you rightly place your anticipations of happiness at home, on congeniality of character. I know some who have neglected what regards character, and yet have fondly imagined at least that they should not be miserable. Alas! they are now undeceived. They bleed on the altar erected by their own folly, and their wound is incurable. Every day reminds them of felicities which they might once have secured, and irritates feelings which will be composed by nothing but the opium of death. Half their virtues are shattered, and the other half seem to move in chains. They have generosity, but it is chilled. They could spread an intellectual feast, but they must each partake of such a feast without a companion. They have energies which they could wield mightily in the animated ranks of *the sacramental host*, but those who should be their auxiliaries are their antagonists. Thwarted, forsaken, weary, and despondent, they sink into melancholy or misanthropy, and finish life without having achieved or enjoyed a thousandth part of what was originally within their grasp. But why should I intrude with this gloomy contrast on a mind revelling amidst delicious hopes? Go forward, attended with all auspicious omens; invite the full influence of piety, and having resources in the divine attributes, and your own and your Maria’s mind, meet every vicissitude of life, and every frown of mortals, with heroic, with apostolic fortitude and tranquillity. I shall rejoice to witness your progressive satisfaction.”—*Rev. Joseph Hughes to Mr. Foster, 1808.*

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS, FACTS, SUGGESTIONS, .

§c. §c.

WRITTEN DURING MR. FOSTER'S RESIDENCE AT FROME.

1. A long, admonitory, and cogent conversation with Mr. and Mrs. ——— about education. Insisted on the indispensable law of habitual, prompt, and absolute obedience of young children. In observing on the *mode* of obtaining this obedience, represented strongly the wretchedness of the plan which does not maintain authority as a necessary and habitual thing in so uniform a manner that the child scarcely even *thinks* of resistance, any more than of thrusting its hand into the fire,—but by a succession of violent efforts, each of which is of the nature of a battle, and a trial of strength and of rights with the child, in which the success (when success even of any kind is gained) is just a bare effect of physical force. Strongly represented that acts of authority and correction should be done *without bustle*, in a short, calm, decisive manner.

2. How transcendently ridiculous is the excess of the passion of love, when the object is demonstrably a very insignificant one. A young newly-married pair have just been in this neighbourhood; the young man was opposed for a while by the girl's father; but after some time, even the old fellow thought the young one would *die*, if he were prevented from attaining the object. I could not help asking contemptuously, "And what are the illustrious qualities of this girl? (I had been well informed she was very insignificant.) What is she to be to him, or to do for him? Has she angelic virtue, or extraordinary sense, or vast stores of knowledge, or any other rare, inestimable resources for creating the happiness of an associate?" I could perceive that some of the persons (young ones) before whom I ridiculed this passion, understood me to scorn, and therefore not to comprehend, and to be incapable of feeling, ardent sentimentalism *unconditionally*. I therefore observed that this ridicule is absolutely warranted and rational, when

the object of passion does really not possess any of the high and rare qualities; but that on the very same principles a deep passion is dignified and rational, to a certain extent, when the object actually does, in the estimate of sober intelligence, possess distinctions of extraordinary value. It would *not* have been a desertion of reason, and ridiculous thing, to have felt an enthusiastic passion for Lady Jane Grey. Certainly the excess of feeling which regards a human being as a kind of divinity, is in all possible cases absurd, and therefore either ridiculous or criminal; still this does not prevent that a *great degree* of passion is in some definable cases rational.

3. Walked with a gentleman into a very singular and very beautiful rural scene; was disgusted and amused by his inappropriate and extravagant expressions of admiration;—"glorious," "incomparable," "why this is heaven itself," &c. I could not ascertain whether he really felt any considerable degree of interest, but I thought he did. I could perceive he had not the smallest perception of the distinct *kinds* and gradations of beauty, nor of any of the principles and laws of observation. A manufactory is going to be built in this solitary scene; he thought this would be a great improvement to it.

4. Remarked of several persons that their minds are *sensible all round* the circle of their operations; they are silly, whimsical, or perverse on *no* subject; they have nothing of what are sometimes called *crotchets*, *maggots*, *hobby-horses*.

5. What an inconceivable measure of domestic mischief and vexation would be prevented by a little self-government in the selection and pronunciation of words.

6. Mr. C., a preacher, told me how very tiresome and useless he felt the long visits which he seemed under the necessity of making,—visits, including, perhaps, dinner, tea, and supper. I suppose there are hundreds of preachers, and thousands of other reflective persons, who would join in this complaint. It is high time they should be advised to adopt, according to their own convictions of the value and use of time, a decisive, time-saving plan, and that the people should be taught the propriety of not censuring such a plan and resolution.

7. Struck exceedingly with the thought, how completely men, for the most part, are and must be confined to their own little spot of this earth, like the animalculæ belonging to their own particular leaf, or rabbits keeping to their warren. It is a great consolation under this feeling of extreme confinement, that the earth is substantially the same everywhere; in any distant part which I might wish to see, the earth only consists of earth, grass, trees, hills, stones, waters, &c., with just here and there, indeed, an extraordinary circumstance, as a glacier, a volcano, a vast cataract, a large race of animals, or some remarkable monument of human industry or art. These one should be most happy to see, if one could pass instantaneously from one to another; but the vast spaces between these constitute the bulk of the world, and are quite of a common order. One may nearly as well be confined to a space of ten square miles as have the power of rapidly expatiating over half a continent.

Interesting subject of speculation.—How men are confined to their own little habitations; their own little district of fields, paths, brooks (or *one* brook), and hillocks; their own little circle of acquaintance; their own little sphere of observation.

What is the use or value of communities, extending beyond actual communication—of states, republics, kingdoms, empires?

How can we take interest enough in distant beings of our own sort, to feel anything that deserves to be called universal benevolence? Why did the supreme Disposer put so many beings in one world, under circumstances which necessarily make them strangers to one another?

Views which strongly realize to the mind the vast multitude of mankind, tend to contract benevolence. The mind seems to say, What can I do with all this crowd? I cannot keep them in my habitual view; I cannot extend my affections to a thousand millions of persons who know nothing, and care nothing about me or each other; I can do them no good, I can derive no good from them; they have all their own concerns, and I have mine; if I were this moment annihilated it would be all the same to them, and if a whole continent full of them were annihilated it would

be the same to me;—there is no connection, nor relation, nor sympathy, nor mutual interest between us. I cannot, therefore, care anything about them; my affections cannot reach beyond these four or five with whom my own personal interests are immediately connected.

8. What a numberless succession of distressing feelings must attend the life of a person who has some striking deformity. I undesignedly caused one of these feelings lately, when I called in the dusk of the evening, at the house of a poor person in this town, who belongs to our society. There lives with her another poor woman, who supports herself by working in the fields, &c. This woman has, I am told, a very frightful and monstrous configuration of the one side of her face, caused, it is said, by her mother being frightened during pregnancy. She wears always a handkerchief or cloth over this side of her face. Without knowing the woman or the unfortunate circumstance, I observed in the darkness of the evening that the person's face as she sat by the fire, was thus partly bound up, and asked the woman of the house, "What is the matter with your friend?" and I saw and regretted the movements indicating confusion and distress in the person in question, while the other was telling me what the matter was. It would be a very benevolent exercise of talent to write a piece in the way of consolation to persons labouring under the affliction of deformity. This may indeed have been already done, if one knew by what author. I remember having read a foolish novel which professed to have this intention. The mode of doing it was, to make the young woman, by a lucky accident, become heiress to the wealth of an old nobleman, amounting to £800,000.

9. (Of preachers.) It is strange to observe how some men, whose *business* is thought and truth, acquire no enlargement, accession, or novelty of ideas, from the course of many years, and a wide scope of experience. It might seem as if they had slept the last twenty years, and now awaked with exactly the same intellectual stock, which they had before they began the nap.

10. In glancing over the movements and local varieties of my past life, I feel a degree of regret to think what an immense number of *pictures* my mind has lost; what a num-

ber of views of woods, hills, streams, towns, ruins, human companies, have been before these eyes, and for a while painted on this imagination, which are now quite vanished. Of a great many others I retain but the faintest trace. I am led to this reflection by having just recalled (I do not know what suggested it) the scenes, the persons, the conversations at and about Mr. Chippendale's in a wild part of Yorkshire, which I have not probably recollected for months or years past. I find this recollection associated (I am totally ignorant why) with another scene which I do not know whether I ever saw in reality or not, and with a third which I did see near Kilkenny or Clonmel, I cannot tell which. It would really have been a good thing to have kept, ever since the earliest youth, a progressive record of all the circumstances and objects which excited great attention at the time, and to have read over this record entirely once or twice every year, in order to retain the images clearly in the mind. Such a plan would have rendered one's retrospect far more distinct than it now is.

11. After reading an hour or two in Shakespere, with astonishment at the incomparable accuracy, and as it were *tangible relief* of all his images, I have walked an hour or two more in the act of trying to take on my mind the most perfect perceptions possible of all the surrounding objects and circumstances. Found and have very often found, that set laborious attention is absolutely necessary to this. I take no images completely, *involuntarily* and *unconsciously*. It is, however, sometimes a good way of taking a *wide general* image, to open the eyes, and let them fix or wander without precisely looking at any thing (even when they are fixed) strongly the while exerting the mind to seize the whole compass at once of all that can thus come into the eye.

12. Never before so attentively observed, between where I sat and the light, the manner in which the drops of rain fall. They form a vast number of *continuous lines*, and thus have far less the appearance of multitude and confusion, than it would seem that so vast a number must produce. They (these lines) have some little the appearance of falling arrows.

13. Observed a long time, through a small opening in a

completely built and closed shed, a cow and calf. The cow advanced her head to the opening to observe *me* too. We looked in each other's face, at a very short distance, a long time, and I indulged a kind of wondering about the nature of our mutual consciousness and thought of each other. (By the way, the mutual recognition of beings of any order, is a very strange and mysterious thing.) I observed the great difference between the degree of intelligence expressed in the eyes and looks of the cow, and in those of the calf. Yet vastly less difference than between the looks of a *human* infant and a mature person.

Observed the beautiful appearance of the numerous shining flexures or wrinkles on the neck and shoulders of the cow. Noticed also, an exquisite beautiful cerulean appearance within the eyes of the calf, in the half-darkness (more than half) of the shed.

Observed that the cow's *attention* was much more *excited* (even when the calf did look at me), and much longer fixed and continued, than that of the calf. (Vide *Journal*, 792.)

14. Have been a thousand times struck, and very forcibly this morning, with the miserable, degraded, and almost revolting appearance, of the visages, both in features and expression, of the lowest rank of the poor, especially when old. Oh, how little is made of the human species in dignity, refinement, knowledge, and happiness, in comparison with what they *might* become, under the influence of good institutions—of education—of religion, and a state of society which should *easily* secure a competence without so much labour!

15. I have seen the bad effect between a husband and wife, of the one of them pertinaciously retaining some *secret*, as inviolable, which the other knows him or her to possess, and wishes, for the very sake of the pleasure of total union and confidence, to be simply informed of; and which is retained merely for the sake of showing my independence—that I *can* keep a secret—that I have a will of my own—that I will not be *obliged* to tell a thing—or that when I have said I would not tell, I will stand to my word.

My distinctest recollection of this kind is in the case of Mr. and Mrs. ——. Mrs. —— was a widow, and a number

of years older than Mr. —. She, during their courtship, was one time going to tell him her age, for the sake of frankness; he, in the spirit of gallantry, said he would not hear anything about her age; he did not care about her being a little older than himself; she therefore did not tell him her age. After they were married, perhaps a good while after (they had been married many years at the time I became acquainted with them), he wished, as a mere matter of friendly, or of slight, curiosity, to know how old she was; she said he had not let her tell this before, and she therefore did not choose to tell him now. This struck him as a somewhat unfriendly thing, and at the same time gave a kind of artificial importance to the secret, merely as *being* a guarded secret. These feelings naturally caused a propensity to recur frequently to this trifling circumstance, with various modes of attempting to elicit the secret; but no, she would keep her secret, that she would,—and would defy him ever to learn what he was so curious to know.

I have a number of times seen him either hurt or vexed by her silly obstinacy in retaining this petty means of plaguing him when he was inclined to be curious. This little dirty feeling of keeping an advantage against him; of having something which she could defy him to obtain, was her motive; for nothing at all *depended* on her age, or on his knowing it. How much I despised a woman who could forego one particle of the affection which a kind discarding of all reserve might have excited, for so stupid a kind of pleasure.

16. When we were remarking that vanity is confined to no station, and that there is hardly any possible accomplishment on which men may not pique themselves, Mr. Hiskett told me he knew a man who used to break stones on the road, who was vain in a very high degree of his *excellence* in this *department*; he would break a load of stones with any man in England. He added that he had heard a chimney-sweeper indulge in the same boast of superiority, with an appearance of great self-complacency.

It is most mortifying to feel how little the clearest possible perception of a certain class of feelings, being both irreligious and despicable, and the clearest possible perception when these feelings rise in the mind, and, in addition,

an extreme contempt of these feelings, and of one's self for indulging, and even for being subject to them—how little all this tends to prevent their rising in the mind. This is my own experience in respect of *vanity*, whether as to its pleased or its mortified feelings. Yet I would hope the time will come when I shall feel that these hateful weeds are eradicated. An accurate perception of what feelings *are* vanity, or at least will appear so if disclosed, enables one to preserve an *appearance* tolerably free from the signs of vanity; but under this managed appearance one has the loathsome consciousness how much of the vile feeling there is within. Even at this moment I feel vanity in *having* this accurate perception of what my feelings are, and how they would appear. I feel vanity to think, that probably if a good judge of human nature were casually to see these lines he would say, "How well he understands himself; how far he is from the weakness of being duped by his own mind."*

17. One has been amused sometimes, when the one of the domestic associates has advanced an opinion, or recited a supposed fact, which the *other* has thought extremely absurd, to see that other in haste to express his or her contempt of such folly of opinion, or credulity of belief, instead of silently sliding the circumstance or the subject out of conversation, or mildly expressing that he or she cannot entirely concur in opinion or belief, and endeavouring to make as good a retreat as possible for the associate's ignorance or weakness. I say one has been *amused*; but in some instances one has felt a painful sympathy with the person so treated with scorn by an intimate relative, and before a number of witnesses, each of whom would have politely let pass the unfortunate remark or narration. Striking instances in Mr. and Mrs. —, and Dr. and Mrs. —. Mr. — said, "Oh, nonsense, nonsense, my

* La vanité est si ancrée dans le cœur de l'homme, qu'un goujat, un marmiton, un crocheteur se vante et veut avoir ses admirateurs: et les philosophes même en veulent. Ceux qui écrivent contre la gloire veulent avoir la gloire d'avoir bien écrit; et ceux qui le lisent veulent avoir la gloire de l'avoir lu; et moi qui écris ceci, j'ai peut-être cette envie; et peut-être que ceux qui le liront l'auront aussi.—PASCAL, *Pensées*, Partie I. art. v. 3.

dear." Dr. — said, "Do make a *little* use of your reason," when his wife told a story which she had heard of Lord somebody having expended £30,000 on a breed of turkeys.

18. Was told of a party of musicians, who heard with indifference the first long-expected account of the victory over the combined fleets, and seemed almost vexed at the interruption. I was disposed to applaud them; as a general principle, men ought to be so intent on their work as to deprecate *every* interruption, and to feel that *that* is what they have at present to mind.

19. How glad one is this morning, that one did not say some things to which an indignant feeling prompted last evening, and which at the time would have appeared to one's judgment as pure justice; but which it is now very easy to see, would have been partly unjust and altogether useless, and would have caused a very awkward social embarrassment this morning. How long will it be before one shall attain a state of mind which will permit, at every instant, a luminous and impartial operation of the understanding?

20. Most forcibly struck yesterday, while hearing S. G.'s account of the sufferings of his wife (sufferings which she has now endured several years, and of which she has no prospect of a termination, or even relaxation, but by death), with these two considerations:—1. How little one realizes to thought or feeling the sufferings of others, while one is well one's self.—2. What infinite cogency ought to be felt in the duty of making the best and most indefatigable improvement of health and ease, while they continue to be granted. Oh, what a mass of guilt, on this account, my conscience pronounces on the review of past life.

21. I have just crushed a moth which was hurt by flying near the candle. I have thus demolished a most admirable system of mechanism, motion, sensation, life. Is the being destroyed? does no finer part survive? is this active, animated creature now consigned to eternal oblivion and unconsciousness?

22. Recollect, in some vulgar instances, the vast difference as to a man's manners, between his being in the immediate sphere of his practice and authority, and out of

it. Remarkable instance in the captain of a Dublin and Liverpool packet; instance in a collier at Norton, a-kind of foreman. He was quite an unassuming, and what is called sheepish creature in a parlour where I had seen him before, but he was *all man* when seen on his own proper ground; all man, not only in respect of his habitual companions, but in respect of the very identical persons whom he had been so awkward and half-timid with, in the parlour.

23. While Mr. D. was reading a chapter this morning, I had a deep feeling of disliking all social exercises, unless it could be with an individual or two with whom I could feel an entire reciprocation of soul. This was a feeling of *individuality*, not of impiety; and how often I have experienced it, even in the presence of worthy people;—a feeling as if I could wish to vanish out of the room, and find myself walking in some lonely wood. I have a feeling of being still completely insulated, and that therefore the *forms* of a serious sociality are irksome. This is not felt in the public exercises of a congregation, by the official person, because he feels to be occupied in *his own work*, as an *official and insulated individual*, and not as one of the large and heterogeneous company. His sympathies are not *seeking* to mingle with all the beings who are present, in the same manner as they feel as if they ought to do, when it is only a small domestic party.

24. I know not how to bring into intelligible description a feeling which I have many times been obscurely conscious of having, and particularly in two or three instances of late;—a feeling of revolting when I find myself coming into any thing like intimate, confiding kindness (I have no reference to any kind of *personalities* whatever) with persons, however worthy and kind, if they are not the individual or two with whom my intimacy can be congenial and entire. It is a part and an operation of the same feeling which would recoil from the direct personalities of love with any one that was not the absolute *object* of love. It is a noble law, that (in the case of a refined and reflective mind at least) all the symbols that of right belong to tenderness are felt to be out of place with any one but a real *object* of tenderness. But according to this law, conjugal life, with a being that is not sympathetic, congenial, and beloved, must

be a very revolting and odious thing, to a person of such a mind as I have mentioned. That this is a fact I now recollect to have heard emphatically asserted by a sensible man.

25. Wesley's moderation in sleep, and his rigid constancy in rising early, being mentioned in the company of Mr. Bradburn, who travelled with Wesley almost constantly for years, he said that Wesley generally slept several hours *in the course of the day*; that he had himself seen him sleep three hours together often enough. This was chiefly in his carriage, in which he accustomed himself to sleep on his journeys, and in which he slept as regularly, as easily, and as soundly, as if he had gone to bed. A zealous, ignorant Methodist, who considered Wesley as altogether an angel, was most indignant at hearing this said by Mr. S., who heard Bradburn say it, and exclaimed, "Bradburn must be a liar!"

26. Have been looking a little while in the parish register of this town, which begins in the first year of Elizabeth. I felt something venerable by its antiquity, even in such a dull thing as this. The impression is from reflecting that all these persons (those recorded, and those who recorded them, in the earlier part) are so long since dead; and that so many of the things, and persons, and events, that we look back upon as long since gone, were posterior to the birth or marriage here recorded.

27. Had a most beautiful evening walk, and a diversity of views. From an eminence overlooked a wide extent of wood, the soft moulded forms of the superficies of which were inexpressibly beautiful;—distant country; remote hills and horizon; setting sun, the *White Horse*, the venerable memorial of Alfred, which I looked upon with an emotion which few other monuments could cause. There was a most enchanting softness spread over the whole view of heaven and earth, which gradually faded into the sombre, and then the gloom of evening.

28. How strongly the wish comes on me while traversing this solitude, in the twilight hour, that I may not live a trifling idle life, that I may not live altogether in vain. How powerfully I felt this same sentiment when standing by the *White Horse*, on the Westbury hills, and apostrophising the spirit of Alfred. What despicable earth I

must have been *not* to feel in this manner in such a situation with its associations. The sun is setting. Go, glorious and beneficent orb; I am sorry if thou shalt not be immortal. Oh I hope I shall never more waste thy light.

29. I am privileged to see one more night of surpassing beauty;—a moonlight night, with a gentle, unequal gale, in an August so temperate, and so wet with delicious rains, that the *intense* green of the earth is perceptible by this moonlight. I feel an earnest wish to seize such a view of nature, and fix it in my mind, even for ever. It is a very noble luxury to see such aspects of solemn beauty; and I will not be ungrateful nor neglectful.

30. A wide soft scene of field and wood:—one most forcibly feels the insufficiency of those despicable things called *words*—to do justice to Nature at this season. After a succession of warm and rainy days the green seems infinitely *condensed*, it is more *deeply* green than one ever, almost saw. The slight yellow tinge now assumed by the corn fields is *unharmonious*, but yet extremely welcome. If I describe this as a *sedate* evening, the *word* will appear dull, but the *thing* to which this word is inapplicable, is extremely bland and grateful. The air has a considerable current and is most balmy. It is equally and perfectly free from the sultriness of summer, and the chilness of winter. Indeed it has nothing of the chilness which is usual in a summer evening, after and contrasted with a hot day. This is of all kinds of weather, the weather for me; it is not specifically adapted to *one* season, and therefore partly pleasing and partly not so; but it is *all pleasing*, it is a weather for universality, and such as one might wish to *last* to the end of the world.

31. Have been reading a most awful account of an eruption of Vesuvius; how far correct is one of the feelings caused by this description? namely this; a feeling as if the actions of man, in a *moral* view, and in the sight of the Creator, could scarcely be of any manner of consequence; the creature as a physical being appearing so inconceivably insignificant, so despicable, so much on a level with the smallest reptile, when he and his powers, &c., are placed in thought beside these enormous natural phenomena and powers.

But the feeling cannot be right when it goes the length, as I feel it inclined to do, of annihilating all difference between virtue and vice, in the way of asking, What signifies it what *thoughts*, as they are called, this despicable animalcule entertains in what he calls his mind? what signifies it into what articulations he may form the trivial sound which he calls his voice, in uttering what he calls speech? what can it signify in what manner he uses his insect *limbs* in what he calls action, and sometimes *conduct*? what signifies all the trivial action, thought, speech, and existence itself of such an atom, that he should deem himself under some sublime law of accountableness to the Infinite Spirit, and there should be an awful distinction between moral good and evil in such an agent?

Perhaps after all, there is but little real analogy between the *physical* and the *moral* standard of great and little; perhaps not enough to warrant our drawing from the one any measures by which to judge of the things belonging to the other. Taken as a mere physical agent, MAN, compared to the physical powers and grandeur of a *volcano* is infinitely little and despicable; but it is not in his physical powers and being that man finds his true value; he is an intellectual and moral agent, and if the phenomena and qualities of *this* moral and intellectual being could possibly be justly compared, by means, if it existed, of any intermediate principle and common measure of proportions, with the grand physical phenomena of an earthquake, a stormy ocean, or a volcano, those moral phenomena might prove much the more grand.*

While reading this tremendous account of Vesuvius (and as long as it is forcibly remembered) how contemptible appears my own comparison of the valour and anger of Homer's heroes to Vesuvius.† Achilles like Vesuvius!!

* L'homme n'est qu'un roseau le plus faible de la nature, mais c'est un roseau pensant. Il ne faut pas que l'univers entier s'arme pour l'écraser. Une vapeur, une goutte d'eau suffit pour le tuer. Mais quand l'univers l'écraserait, l'homme serait encore plus noble que ce qui le tue, parce qu'il sait qu'il meurt; et l'avantage que l'univers a sur lui, l'univers n'en sait rien. Ainsi toute notre dignité consiste dans la pensée. C'est de là qu'il faut nous relever, non de l'espace et de la durée. Travaillons donc à bien penser; voilà la principe de la morale.—PASCAL, *Pensées*, Partie I. art. iv. 6.

† "Let this susceptible youth, after having mingled and burned in

How impossible to have made such a comparison, if I had composed those sentences while under the full impression of the account I have just now read, of the awful phenomena of one of the eruptions of Vesuvius (in Dr. Gregory's *Economy of Nature*). But yet, *is it absurd in regard to the ideas of the reader*, who probably has not in his mind, any more than the writer had in his, a grand habitual idea of the volcano? *to him it will be but strong enough*, and he will feel no extravagance. Whereas, had some much inferior thing been mentioned (as a *furnace* for instance), it would have appeared quite feeble, and almost despicable, as a parallel to Achilles and Diomedes. We do injustice to almost every thing we mention; our ideas are infinitely less (if it is any sublime object at least) than the thing itself.

32. Beauty when in any graceful way associated with grandeur becomes more beautiful. Instance,—some fine trees seen on the glowing horizon, just after the sun is set.

33. A large and very aged thorn, but still in a full and vigorous state, prolific of its prickles. Analogy,—an old man whose vices are still in full vigour.

34. Very curious appearance of the collective *vibration* of all the wings of a very large number of rooks flying away. To take the image to advantage, the eye must vaguely fix on the whole company, and not be let to single out any individuals.

35. To exert a great *degree* of attention in an instant, is a most desirable thing. One *might*—one now and then can, throw one's whole soul through one's eyes in a single glance.

36. There is a time for the most easily agitated thing to be at rest; a willow, with exceedingly slender and tall sprigs, is perfectly still, even to the last leaf, which does not tremble in this evening calmness.

37. I really feel a special sympathy with this bat which flies round and round over my head, and with yonder owl which I hear from a distance.

38. How very imperfectly five months hence, in winter, I

imagination among heroes, whose valour and anger flame like Vesuvius, who wade in blood, trample on dying foes, and hurl defiance against earth and heaven; let him be led into the company of Jesus Christ and his disciples, as displayed by the evangelists, with whose narrative, I will suppose, he is but slightly acquainted before."—*Essay on the Aversion of Men of Taste to Evangelical Religion. Letter V.*

shall be able to form the image of this soft and beautiful scene and season. One of these exquisite pictures formed by a tree on the sky, will then be but faintly imagined.

39. Extremely grand appearance of the clouds after the setting of the sun. Chiefly a soft, darkened red, becoming quite dark above and then below, along the horizon, a ridge of dark purple mountains . . — It is now become still more beautiful. The appearance of some of these clouds is very remarkable, for being at once extremely soft, and extremely bright, an union which painting cannot reach.— While I am writing these lines almost all this brightness is gone; the whole is fading into the gloom of evening. The papillons of the night have begun to appear.

40. When standing on a high eminence one feels partly a greater being and partly a less;—greater, as commanding an ampler view — less, as needing this heap of earth to mount one's littleness to this privilege.

41. One verifies in a scene like this one's real superiority to the brutes, which take no interest in the wide diversity of beauties, or in this evening solemnity.

42. This seems to be the hour of Jubilee for hares. Yet they cannot trust *me*; they run into their woody covert. To catch the sight, a distinct sight of each one of them as they go, is a good exercise for quickness of eye.

43. How rapidly all that is beautiful is passing away. The flowers of the year, an almost infinite number, are almost all gone, and will be flowers no more. Soon, very soon, this rich immensity of foliage which still continues, and this delightful verdure over the plains and hills, will also be vanished away to be seen no more for ever. The next will be altogether a new production in its own year, and *it* also will have its season and depart for ever. The animal tribes will also have theirs and not very long hence will be all dead. On re-opening the book I find two of these animals, two little flies, dead on the page, having been closed in without my perceiving it, when I a moment since shut the book. They, even they, were gay and full of life at that recent moment that I wrote the sentence respecting the fleeting life of the animal tribes.

CHAPTER V.

RESIDENCE AT BOURTON-ON-THE-WATER—VISIT TO FROME—
—ECLECTIC REVIEW—BIRTH OF HIS SON—EXCURSION
INTO NORTH WALES—VISIT TO BRISTOL AND FROME—
HALL'S PREACHING—DEATH OF HIS PARENTS—DOMESTIC
HABITS—REMOVAL TO DOWNEND.

1808—1817.

MR. FOSTER'S marriage took place in May, 1808. In one of his earliest letters after this event, addressed to a highly esteemed friend* at Frome, he says, "If the distance of some miles and some months could obliterate from my own mind all regard for persons with whom I have passed so many agreeable and animated hours, I ought to conclude that I am myself no longer remembered with kindness at the Iron-Gates, or at the cottage; but as I experience no such effect of time and distance, I will not let myself believe it is experienced by my friends, especially as probably less alteration has taken place in their circumstances than in mine; unless, indeed, my good friend Miss S. has by this time been (where I have repeatedly warned you there was danger of her going) to Gretna Green. In this last case, I fear that she at least will have quite forgotten me, whereas I, after an adventure somewhat of this kind, have a very faithful and friendly remembrance of her. I seem to have so little more to tell about myself in consequence of the change of situation caused by that adventure, that I clearly perceived those adventurers who fill long volumes with their own story, must make very large use of fiction; and that a

* Mrs. John Sheppard, August 3, 1808.

book which I have just been reading, written by a very plain-sailing gentleman of the name of Patrick Gass, who narrates a grand voyage of discovery, across the continent of North America to the Pacific Ocean and back again, in a rather thin octavo, is the very standard for all, who, in relating their own adventures, are determined to tell nothing but what is new, and nothing but what is true. For myself, indeed, if I will tell nothing but what is true, I must tell nothing at all that is new, for as to saying, that I am happy in the changed situation, that is but the same thing that a tolerable number of millions of men have said of themselves when they had been married hardly three months.

"If I were a young man, I should very likely be saying with a prompt and sanguine confidence,—‘Well, and why may not a man, who can be happy with an associate three months, assure himself of a similar happiness, if they should live three years, or even thirty years?’ But I am old enough to be well aware how many people, who are wiser than myself, would laugh at the romantic cast of such a presumption, and shall therefore keep the notion to myself.

"My habits in this new residence are sober, quiet, and recluse, to the last degree. I will answer for it, there is not a mouse that haunts any bank, or brake, or barn, in this county, that is seldomer seen than I am, or that runs more instantly into its hiding-place, if it should happen to meet any eye, even that of a cat. My life, when at Wall-bridge, was perfect dissipation, as to the article of visiting, compared with what it is now; but I do not, therefore, insinuate it is a life of industry: excepting a quantity of reading, there has been but a miserably small portion of work done since I came hither, and since I entered the house in which I am now writing; I am vowing, however, and almost beginning to mend."

"Nobody in the village," he tells another friend,* "except the sick or lame, has kept so well at home, as we have done the last ten weeks. We almost literally go no whither, but to meeting on the Sunday, and a short walk into the fields sometimes in the evenings of the other days. I believe we are thought the strangest people in the place, and it is very convenient to me they should think so. But they think this stay-at-home fondness, this being so satisfied with each other, will, in due time, have had its day, and leave us to wish for the assistance of our neighbours to help us drag on the tediousness of life. They are not, however, apprised, what a vast number of quarto and octavo books there are yet on the shelf, or likely to come there. Till a tolerable share of these are conquered, we must make shift to endure each other's company alone, as well as we can." In another letter,† he describes the village as being "the one place in the world where nothing can be said to happen in the whole course of the year; nothing that is worth telling at the distance of five miles off." "This," he adds, "is, perhaps, a very good thing to say of a place, when one considers how much that is remarkably bad takes place in most other towns and villages. To have nothing remarkable to say of the events of a place, where there are a good many people, is surely some proof that Satan is not so active there as in some other of his haunts. There are several places round, at no great distance, where a far greater number of notable incidents are constantly occurring to help out the talk and scandal of society. Bourton is hardly good or bad enough to make it worth while that half a dozen sentences should be uttered or written about it."

Mr. Hughes spent two days at Bourton in August, and then, accompanied by his friend, set off for Cheltenham.

* To Mrs. Gowing, Aug. 1, 1808.

† July 3, 1809.

"After staying about a day," Foster tells his parents,* "we walked to Gloucester (nine miles), and went by coach to Thornbury, eleven miles from Bristol. It was near the end of the week; Hughes was to be in Bristol on the Sunday, and I proposed going with him, but on the Saturday it was heard, that a good old minister, who was to have come to preach at Thornbury on the following day, had suddenly died that morning. I therefore stayed and preached twice. I had not preached there before for perhaps eight years.† On the Sunday evening I walked to Bristol with two of the Bristol students, one of whom is nephew to Mr. Hall, and of the same name.‡ He had been lately to see Mr. Hall, and I did not fail to make many inquiries about him, as I have also done from other quarters. As to his mind, he has been perfectly well a long time, but his health is greatly oppressed by an almost continual pain in his side and back, to which he has been much subject almost all his life. He is said to preach incomparable sermons still, and is likely to remain at Leicester, a very dull place, by no means adapted to such a man, who ought to be in some one of the three or four principal towns in England. In Bristol I saw Mr. Bogue, Dr. Ryland, and others. I was two or three days about Downend, and was kept in almost continual motion, in order to call on each of the persons, whose houses I used to visit when a resident there. Most of them I found as well as when I lived there, though some of the aged persons are fast declining, and a few are dead. I went with Hughes to Bath, where he preached on a week-day evening for Mr. Jay, in whose company we passed a number of hours. He retains quite undiminished his extreme popularity, and his inflexible sobriety and excellence of cha-

* September 1, 1808.

† Probably the visit mentioned in the Journal, No. 764.

‡ The late Rev. John Keene Hall, M.A., of Kettering.

racter. . . . Hughes accompanied me to Frome, though he was not able to stay there more than half a day: he left me and returned to Bristol. His health is now firm; his mind is active, and he is kept in almost continual exertion by his concern in the Bible Society, the Tract Society, the Hibernian Society, the Surrey Mission, and various and frequent preaching, besides his regular employment on the Sunday. His religious opinions and devotional habits are quite established, his talents have attained their full maturity, and, both from nature and constant exercise, he has very great facility and quickness of thought and expression. . . .

"At Frome I was received with the most animated kindness, both among the richer and the poorer class of my acquaintance,—a kindness to which I could not make an adequate return in the way of giving much of my company, as I had determined not to stay more than three days. I felt the propriety, even as a matter of appearance, of not being like a rambler from home, besides the impatience of affection to be again with my dear domestic associate. I returned to her at the time I had determined, found her well, and was welcomed with inexpressible tenderness. The felicity of thus rejoining her seemed to me to exceed even the joy of being first united to her. Nearly four months have now elapsed since that time, and on both sides the affectionate complacency has very sensibly increased. We both every day express our gratitude to Heaven for having given us to each other; and we hope that it will continue a cause of the most lively gratitude as long as we live, and also in a state after death. I most entirely believe that no man on earth has a wife more fondly affectionate, more anxious to promote his happiness, or more dependent for her own on his tenderness for her. In the greatest number of opinions, feelings, and concerns,

we find ourselves perfectly agreed: and when any thing occurs on which our judgments or dispositions differ, we find we can discuss the subject without violating tenderness, or in the least losing each other's esteem, even for a moment. Greater trials of our mutual affection and respect than any that have yet occurred will undoubtedly arise in the course of life, if it is considerably protracted; but the experiment thus far has given us a stronger confidence in the perpetuity of tenderness and harmony than it was possible for us to have, previously to any experiment at all."

Foster's connexion with the Eclectic Review has been mentioned in the preceding chapter. From the period of his settlement at Frome, he became one of the most frequent contributors to that Journal, which for several years was the only one in this country that combined the advocacy of "spiritual Christianity" with liberal views on social and political questions. At its commencement churchmen and dissenters were united in its support, on the understanding that the points at issue between them were not to be brought under discussion. It soon, however, became evident that a neutrality which would exclude from animadversion not only the abstract question of religious establishments, but all abuses, past and present, which might attach to our social institutions, would narrow the freedom of discussion to a degree, that, in a nation as practical as ours, would deprive the Review of all interest to persons holding decided opinions. Against this equivocal and undignified position which even then, and still more in later years, would be so unsatisfactory to earnest minds, Mr. Foster made frequent and pointed remonstrances, which, combined with the tone of several of his articles, contributed to a settlement of the journal on a Nonconformist basis. In a letter to the editor, after alluding to certain clergymen who were concerned in the management of

the Review, he says, "It is utterly impossible to keep on terms with them, I am persuaded, but at the cost of injuring the character of the Review for any thing like spirit and independence. You may be very sure they will not only require that we do not condemn an establishment, or the English establishment, in the abstract, but that we do not presume to touch the abominable corruptions of the actual condition of that church; not only that we do not declare against what is called the British constitution, but also that we be very respectful to the actual government and administration, whatever it may be." "I meant to have added," he writes again, "to the end of Macdiarmid* some good sentences in continuation and conclusion of the remark, that our being pledged to let alone the question of the Establishment is not a pledge to let vile men and vile measures go free because they have belonged, or may at any time belong, to the established church. This would be to make and acknowledge the church, just as it was literally in popish times, the asylum of miscreants, who had only just to get within its walls to laugh at all the agents of justice. But this palpable distinction will probable not be admitted by any high-church readers that may condescend to notice the Review, and therefore either they must be disregarded, or the Review must shift to live in a state of miserable subjugation, despised by those who must be, after all, the resource of any thing that dares to be free and to promote freedom. For it is to me as clear as the sunshine in which I am writing, that nothing of an useful work of this kind will ever succeed that does not substantially please the dissenters. And this may be done without the slightest approach towards any thing like formal declaration in their favour; but it absolutely never can be done by a trembling,

* Vide Contributions, &c., vol. i. pp. 224, 225, or Eclectic Review, October and November, 1808.

reverential forbearance on all subjects relating to the corruptions, and tyranny, and wicked men involved in the history and practice of the church and state. There absolutely must be something to express an abhorrence of star-chambers, St. Bartholomews, and the principles of non-resistance. And besides the question of policy, should not a work which pretends to be the free and absolutely independent advocate of truth and justice, be anxious to lend a hand against some of the most pernicious evils that ever infested the world? Of what diminutive consequence is the correction of any mere literary errors, and faults, compared with a manly resistance of those notions and that spirit which have made prisoners, wanderers, exiles, or martyrs, of the best and wisest of mankind; which have sanctioned the despotism of the vilest governments, and which still are strongly operating in the same way, even in this country. Look at France, the whole intellectual being and discipline of which is now submitted to a system of instruction wholly prescribed by a tyrant; every thing should be done in every country, not yet totally enslaved, to avert so melancholy a destiny, towards which we have, of late years, been virtually very fast approaching in this country. If the 'supporters' have no hope of 'supporting' the Eclectic Review without a sacrifice of this free and courageous quality, let them lay down their thankless undertaking, and let some other men be sought to undertake a really bold and free work, which should in its prospectus declare, in so many words, that the Bible is to be held sacred, but nothing else on earth—that all subjects whatever are considered as free for discussion;—and that all systems, institutions, and practices, as being merely of human authority, are fully open to the exercise of human reason. The 'supporters' may hobble on a while under their weight, but they may depend upon it that,

without gaining the cordial approbation of dissenters and independent thinkers, they will sink at last; for as to their church friends, they will never help them on without some more settled and distinct pledges and proofs of servitude and obsequiousness.

“What a stupid thing it was to begin a thing on such a plan! They wisely thought, I suppose, that the whole business of preserving neutrality was confined just to two or three bare questions, and that these could evidently be easily avoided. They could not see that this question of neutrality would necessarily extend to ten thousand things in the course of general reasoning and criticism; that it would interfere in all works of history, of political economy, of biography, of theories of government, of political and ecclesiastical controversy, of missionary designs, of education, of rights of conscience, and of discussion of present parties, measures, and expectations.”

When Mr. Foster relinquished the pastoral office at Frome, it was with the painful apprehension that his labours as a Christian minister were finally closed; but, within little more than a year after his marriage, the morbid affection in his throat had so far diminished as to allow of his once more speaking in public. “During the summer and earlier autumn,” he says,* “I preached every Sunday here and there, and generally twice; the last month or two has not been quite so busy, though I have probably never had two unemployed Sundays together. The every Sunday service recalled somewhat of the complaint, which expelled me from a regular pulpit. I am become accustomed to pulpits, desks, stools, blocks, and all sorts of pedestal elevations.” At a later period he informs his mother, “I am returned from another expedition to preach, at a considerable distance, which has taken up several days. Since I wrote

* To Mr. Hughes, Nov. 21, 1810.

to you last, I have gone to preach at two villages or towns, where I had never been before. On reckoning up the number of places in the circuit of neighbourhood at which I have preached since I came to reside here, I find it amounts to *fourteen*—several of them within three or four miles of this village, and several of them as far off as twelve or fourteen miles. Many of these are small congregations, and several of them consisting chiefly of poor people. . . . I am pleased with having so far the means of doing any small degree of good, and feel it an advantage that I am in circumstances to enable me to preach for nothing. This circumstance gives some additional weight to a man's religious instructions, especially in some of the ignorant places where the people are industriously taught by the clergy, and other enemies of the dissenters, that there is some self-interested object in view, in all this busy activity in going about to preach. I every where meet with civility, decent behaviour, and often very friendly attention. . . . It must be acknowledged in behalf of the clergy themselves, that they do not attempt in any active manner to thwart or incommode us. They let us alone, except now and then railing a little at us from their pulpits, and in their convivial meetings. And in this we hear that the one or two of a more serious stamp are not *behind-hand* with the rest, disliking dissenters *as such*, just as much as the more profligate ones dislike the dissenters as religious. And indeed all over England, I believe, that in general the evangelical clergy are found very great bigots, with here and there a rare exception."

Foster's domestic life, so full of satisfaction in its chief relation, acquired additional interest by the birth of a son, in January, 1810. He acknowledges the congratulations of one of his friends on the event in the following terms: "You have my thanks for all the good wishes and con-

gratulatory expressions in which you have manifested your benevolence. I am willing to adopt, as far as I possibly can, your opinion, that it is the parents' fault if the children are not causes of satisfaction, ultimately, rather than vexation. In the case in question, there will in all probability be a more systematical, and a more agreeing and co-operating endeavour to prevent evil, and communicate good, than in the great majority of instances; and indeed this may be, and no great merit neither, for education always appears to me as the one thing which, taken generally, is the most vilely managed on earth. If the fellow turns out *good*, I shall not so much mind about his being extra clever. It is goodness that the world is wretched for wanting; and if all were good, none would need to be able. I am willing to hope that by the time he comes to be a man, if that should ever be, the world will be a little better than it is at present, and will have made a perceptible advance toward that state in which talents will be little wanted. It is at the same time needless to say that it would be gratifying that a son should have some qualifications for being an agent in the happy process. Physically, the chap is deemed, I understand, as promising as his neighbours. My wife is still extremely well, for the time, and I hope will soon be restored to her full health and strength. It is she that I care fifty times more about than I should about any infant. It is only by time and habit that a young child becomes in any great degree interesting to a man, especially a man never in the least accustomed to such children. The young fellow has not yet been thought worth calling by any name. My sisters-in-law do not approve of either Adam or Cain, and one does not like to expose one's self to a veto a third time. If he is lucky enough to get *any* name at last, I should not wonder if it were to be, according to your injunction, John." To another friend he says, "Though I

like female children better than boys, I am better pleased that this is a boy, because a boy, if he grows up with good faculties and good principles, can be made more extensively an agent than a female of even the same faculties and principles; and also it appears but too probable, the age we are entering on may be a very rugged one, and such that benevolence might almost wish that there might be nothing but men to suffer its calamities."

In the summer of 1812, Foster made an excursion into North Wales, in company with Mr. and Mrs. Stokes of Worcester, and two other friends. "Ever since the visit to Bristol and Frome last autumn," he tells Mr. Hughes, "I have been beating my little quiet routine of reading, light criticism, and village preaching, with most exemplary uniformity, with one capital exception indeed, of superlative interest, an excursion through North Wales. The delight with which I contemplated the magnificent scenery was ardent, almost up to the degree of poetry, even notwithstanding a most incommodious lameness which I incurred on one of the earliest days, and retained to the last, from a formidable crush of my foot by rolling a stone among the mountains. The only bad effect that now remains is a certain debility, which will continue for a while, probably, to incapacitate me for any very long walks, if I were inclined, or had occasions, to attempt them. The impression I retain from what I saw, creates a decided intention, should life and health be prolonged, to see those sublime objects yet again, and to take longer time to explore some of the most interesting of the localities, especially the region round Snowden, which imperial eminence I ascended at midnight, and saw the rising of the sun from its summit. . . . This excursion was undertaken (by me) really and truly much more with a view to diversify my ideas, and lay

in some stock in the imagination, than from any calculation of the mere pleasure of beholding." *

In August, 1815, he visited Bristol and Frome, accompanied by Mrs. Foster. Referring to his friends at the latter place, he says, "I revisited at their houses a number of the good people I had once preached to, especially the poor people, who manifested a lively pleasure in seeing me again. A strange number are dead of those whom I knew when I lived there. The oldest and most estimable, however, of my former friends there still lives, and looks well, and is very cheerful, in her eightieth year. She is a person of the rich and what is called genteel class, but of most extraordinary piety and beneficence. I hope she may yet survive a few years, a blessing to the poor, and an example to the rich. In that town the disposition for hearing about religion is increasing in a degree beyond any thing I have known elsewhere. There must be at least two thousand more attendants at places of worship than there were at the time I was in the town; and even at that time I considered it as surpassing, in the proportion of inhabitants so attending, any other place within my knowledge. . . . The grand attraction at Bristol was the preaching of Mr. Hall, who happened to be on a visit there, and preached three Sundays. I contrived to hear him several times, and was glad to have the opportunity, as I had never heard him but twice or three times before. . . . The last sermon I heard him preach, which dwelt much on the topic of *living in vain*, made a more powerful impression on my mind than, I think, any one I ever heard. And this was not simply from its being the most eloquent sermon, unquestionably, that I ever heard, or probably ever shall hear, but from the solemn and alarming truth which it urged and pressed on.

* To Mr. Hughes, September 1, 1812.

the conscience, with the force of a tempest. . . . I suppose every intelligent person has the impression, in hearing him, that he surpasses every other preacher probably in the whole world. In the largest congregation there is an inconceivable stillness and silence while he is preaching, partly indeed owing to his having a weak, low voice, though he is a strong, large-built man; but very much owing to that commanding power of his mind, which holds all other minds in captivity, while within reach of his voice. He has no tricks of art and oratory, no studied gesticulations, no ranting, no pompous declamation. His eloquence is the mighty power of spirit, throwing out a rapid series of thoughts—explanatory, argumentative, brilliant, pathetic, or sublime—sometimes all these together. And the whole manner is simple, natural, grave, sometimes cool, often impetuous and ardent. He seems always to have a complete dominion over the subject on which he is dwelling; and over the subjects, on every side, to which he adverts for illustration. He has the same pre-eminent power in his ordinary conversation as in his preaching. What is best in the account, the power of religion is predominant over every other power in his mind. A devotional spirit is very conspicuous in his religious exercises, and is said, by those who know him best, to be the habitual character of his mind. I was in his company a number of times.”

It has been already noticed that Mr. Foster's father died, in 1814. “Before an advanced period of old age, it was at the beginning of each new year his earnest desire, as far as compatible with submission to the divine will, that it might be his last; so that I have no doubt,” his son observed to a friend, “that he entered on twenty successive years with this desire expressed in prayer.” Mrs. Foster survived her husband to the close of 1816, and during this interval of widowhood, her son, not only as he had uniformly done

during his father's lifetime, contributed liberally to lessen the pressure of outward circumstances, but by writing more frequently than before, endeavoured, with the most sedulous affection, to cheer her loneliness and alleviate the increasing infirmities of age. Foster's last visit to his parents was in the autumn of 1801, and at that time he said of them, "they fear not death, nor need to fear it; for they are eminently ripe for heaven. I have never met with a piety more entire and sublime."

During his residence at Bourton, his family was increased by the birth of five children, of whom two died in infancy. Some of his private habits, and the tenor of his domestic life, will be best understood from the following sketches by himself in his letters to his mother. "I have not yet begun my usual winter practice, of rising before the beginning of day-light in the morning; but it is quite time to resume it, and I intend to do so to-morrow morning. I shall also begin to have a fire in this cold garret. All this dozen years I have always done everything about my own fire myself; and I believe nobody can much excel me in that business; most certainly no one can, in the art of keeping a fire alive with the least consumption of fuel. This is a very requisite art, for coals are very dear here, being all brought from a great distance. There is, therefore, no such thing as what you call *raking* the fire and keeping it in all night. We have always to light anew in the morning, by means of a tinder-box, and a handful of shavings and sticks. It is literally scarcely more than a handful that I make use of for making mine. Our coals, however, are good. But in burning they never, like yours, acquire a sort of pitchy softness and run into large lumps of cinder.

"I wish I could perform every other part of my employments as well as I can make a fire; and that I had ever learnt to be as economical of *time* as of coals. But this I

have not yet learnt, during all these years that my time has been passing away. I have it still to learn, practically, now that so much less a portion of my life, in all probability, remains behind, than that which is expended. I am most deeply mortified to think the case should be so, and sometimes am tempted to despair of its being mended. *But despair cannot be any part of my duty.* I still must hope, and resolve, and pray, and endeavour.

“Hardly any man has his time so much at his command, in one sense, as I have;—no visiting scarcely—very little travelling—very little letter-writing—very little business to transact. I *should* have made, under such circumstances, ten times greater acquisitions and improvements than I have; and should have performed much more that should turn to the account of public utility, of one sort or another. I am often at once grateful and ashamed in comparing my lot with that of many men who would be glad to attend to intellectual pursuits, but are harassed with business, and worn down with cares and vexations; or have some one uniform, constant, severely laborious employment to attend to,—for example, teaching a school; which, at former periods of my life, I thought of as likely to be my own employment for perhaps a great part of my life. Even preaching is a much less laborious thing in my way of performing it, than it is in the case of a settled minister who has to preach three or four times a week, and habitually to the same people. My preaching is here and there, and, for the most part, in places where I do not much mind regular preparation, but *talk* three quarters of an hour to the people, in any strain of thought that I can call up at the time. I have oftener than not, however, a small piece of paper under my eyes, because I have so wretched a memory. But I take no such aid in preaching in two or three of the villages on a Sunday evening.

"In one way and another, I have all manner of books at my command, and can see newspapers every day. By such means I have been enabled in a measure to avoid the disadvantages otherwise inevitable in such an out-of-the-world situation. I habitually see as much as five or six of the periodical Reviews. So that I can learn nearly whatever I want to be informed of, as to the course of literature and of the general affairs of society. I even sometimes feel that too much time is spent in this kind of reading. Very much less would not, however, have well sufficed for the pursuit of that sort of business which has so considerably occupied me now for many years.

"My wife and the brats are still well. Those brats are just now making a great noise, and running about to make themselves warm in the house under me. I have noticed the curious fact, of the difference of the effect of what other people's children do and one's own. In the situations I have formerly been in, any great noise and racket of children would have extremely incommoded me if I wanted to read, think, or write. But I never mind, as to any such matter of inconvenience, *how much* din is made by *these* brats, if it is not absolutely in the room where I am at work. When I am with them I am apt to make them, and join in making them, make a still bigger tumult and noise; so that their mother sometimes complains that we all want whipping together. As to liking freaks and vivacity, I do not feel myself much older than I was twenty years since. I have a great dislike to all stiff and formal, and unnecessary gravity; if it were not so, I should be to children quite an old man, and could have no easy companionship with them. It must be a great evil for parents to have with their children an immoveable, puritanical solemnity—especially when the disproportion in age is so unusually great, as in my case. But I feel no tendency to this; of course, to avoid it is no matter of effort or self-denial.

"I shall not, after some little time longer, know well what to do with John. One shall be very reluctant to send him to school at a distance from home, wherever that may be; and yet there is no doing much good, except in extraordinary cases, in the way of regular pursuit of learning, without the advantage of companions of a boy's own age, and the systematic employment, which cannot be enforced anywhere so effectually as in a school. I am hoping we may remove to some situation where there may be a good school just at hand, that he might attend during the day, and return home at night."*

"I am sitting alone in my long garret, in which I spend a considerable part of every day, excepting the days on which I go out to preach. Here I have a little fire, and, excepting along the middle of the floor, the room is crowded and loaded with papers and books, intermingled with dust that is never swept away. Along this middle space of the floor I walk backward and forward, as much as several hours every day; for I cannot make much of thinking and composing without walking about, a habit that I learnt early in my musing life. Formerly I used to walk about the fields for hours together, indulging imaginations and reflections, thinking of myself and innumerable other objects, reviewing past life, and forming plans or vows for the future. Since I came to this village I have walked in the fields in this way comparatively but little; this garret has served me instead. I have been more in habits of such kind of study as required to have books and pens at hand. But, nevertheless, I probably walk not much less than I did when it was in the open air. It would be a marvellous number of miles, if it could be computed how far I have walked on this floor. It would be a length that would reach to the other side of the globe. If all my musing walks, since I was twenty

* To his Mother, Nov. 1815.

years old, could be computed together, it would not unlikely be a length that would go several times round the globe.

“ I seem as if I could hardly believe that *eight* years within a few weeks, have really passed away since I began to frequent this same garret—a time which I can look back to as if it were but a few months since. This space bears a very material and serious proportion to a whole life of moderate length. And then, too, when it happens to be, as it has been in my case, the meridian portion of life, the part at which life attains its highest maturity, and is preceding, at no great distance, the period of decline, it may be regarded as a portion of higher value than perhaps the same length of time in any other part of life; unless we except the space between the ages of twenty and thirty. Thus regarding it as immensely valuable, and now all past, I cannot but feel some very solemn reflections and emotions, in which regret bears a very prominent share. Conscience admonishes me to how much more effectual purpose these years might have been expended. Gratitude to the divine forbearance, and the divine bounty, claims also a large part in the sentiments with which I ought to dwell on the review. Whatever time is yet to come before death shall shut up the account, may the divine grace enable me to improve it in a far nobler manner; so that, *if* I should live another eight years, I may, at the end of it, be able to say, with animated gratitude,—‘ how much more valuable a portion of my life this has practically been than the preceding eight years, or indeed than *any* preceding portion of my life.’ I do humbly trust, that the more or less time to come, will really be of this improved character, in whatever place that time may be spent.”*

Towards the close of 1817 Mr. Foster left Bourton, and

* To his Mother, Jan. 1816:

became once more a resident and stated preacher at Downend. "It is not without very great hesitation," he informs his friend Mr. Stokes, "that I have come to the conclusion to accept an invitation to preach regularly at Downend, four miles from Bristol; a place where I was stationed several years in the same service as much as fourteen or sixteen years since; but where it is striking to observe how many persons who then formed a part of the congregation do not appear in it now, nor in any other on earth. Those that do remain, profess to have retained a friendly recollection of me during the protracted interval, and for several of them I have always retained a most sincere kindness.

"There is a small proportion of highly cultivated individuals, contrasted, however, so decidedly with the *perfectly* rustic state and character of the great majority, as to constitute an incommodious kind of congregation, since what would seem requisite to please the few, would be of little or no use to the greater number. The style of preaching, must however, at all events, be endeavoured to be adapted to the latter. Indeed the circumstance that has decided me to enter on the undertaking is precisely my having had, for a good while, the design of trying what may be practicable in the way of adapting sermons to such rustics; sermons made on a plan of combining perfect simplicity and intelligibleness, even a degree of obviousness, with what shall have as much as possible of novelty or originality in the way of illustration. I am but very little sanguine as to this plan; but its having been a matter of intended experiment, has, I repeat, been the deciding point in the present case; but for this I should have had no hesitation to decline the situation.

"No doubt an additionally deciding consideration has been, that, declining this station, I might perhaps *never* reside near Bristol at all, nor perhaps for years to come,

should life continue, remove to the neighbourhood of *any* large place, however convinced—as for many years back I have been convinced—that *here* I am a good deal too much, for the most useful improvement, out of the way of seeing what we call the *world*. While I have had an uniform preference for Bristol, I have yet dreaded coming to any positive determination of removing thither under the character of a *preacher unengaged*. The summonses which I might be liable to have, when a preacher happened on any Sunday to be wanting, would, if at all frequent, have been extremely incommodious to me, unless I had made a rule to refuse uniformly, which would not have comported with the sense of duty. They would have been incommodious from the size of the places, and from the necessity of employing more time than I could easily spare in preparations. As the case will *now* be, I shall have my own regular engagement, and that not so onerous as such occasional services would be, if frequent.

“It is, however, quite of the nature of an experiment in a *physical* respect. I am not confident that the old debility of the organs affected by speaking may not return in the degree to forbid a constant course of preaching. In point of emolument, the undertaking has very small temptation. The business of removal will be a heavy grievance; and there are some of our good neighbours whom it will be a matter of sincere regret to leave.”

“Next week, it seems,” he writes to Mr. Hughes, Sept. 23, 1817, “you are, in conjunction with Hall, &c., to appear in the best style at Oxford.* I should very greatly like to hear the prime of our Baptist oratory, but it is not to be. In a humbler way I did my own share, by a long sermon here last Sunday evening, which left me so hoarse as to be scarcely able to talk after it was over.

* At a general meeting of the Baptist Missionary Society.

"By the end of next month, I expect, if all is well, to become a resident again at Downend. This has been determined by a balance of various considerations. As to the mere measure of public exercise, it will make but a trifling difference, as I have been preaching nearly every Sunday for the last seven years, and generally twice in the day."

LETTERS.

LXV. TO MRS. JOHN SHEPPARD.

Bourton, August 3, 1808.

DEAR MADAM, This should be about the time that you have often made your Dorsetshire journey; and possibly you are even now enjoying the society, excursions and rural luxuries of your native downs, and even extending your rides to the sea-shore. Should this be the case, I trust you will bring back to the cottage confirmed health, and such an addition to your spirits as susceptible minds acquire from renewed intercourse with esteemed relatives, and an interval of variegated scene and action. Probably, however, no scene will more cordially please you than the very pretty meadows, and gentle hills round the cottage, with which, besides their acknowledged beauty, you have so long a train of interesting associations. It is, indeed, a very pleasing situation, and I shall not be in danger of losing the recollection, that it is a very pleasing house; I need not say in what light I regard the family with whom I was for several weeks a resident of it. I hope I may yet many times have the pleasure of seeing you in the same place,—excepting indeed the youngest of you; for as to her, I am afraid there can be no chance of her staying there long. There is no doubt in the world, that engineers of a certain description, are often reconnoitring the house, with a view to the best mode of laying siege to it, in order to take her out; nor have I the smallest confidence that she may not voluntarily go over to the enemy. As I

am not entirely unacquainted with the methods adopted by this sort of banditti, I do think, my dear madam, that in case of my being in your neighbourhood a little while hence, it would not be amiss for you and me to hold, between ourselves, a council of war on the subject, in which I humbly think I might be able to make some suggestions, tending to guard against the danger both from external attack or stratagem, and from treachery within.

I hope my good friend, Mr. Walter S., retains that spring and animation of character for which every body admires him, and that, as one requisite to this vivacity, his health is tolerably good. He has no doubt by this time made some of those pleasant excursions, that conduce so much to preserve it. One shall find no man, who has more of the happy art of varying his occupations, and enjoying the full pleasure of each of them in its turn. He seems equally at home in the employment, whether he enters the social circle, or combats a modern quarto volume, or directs the arrangement of buildings or gardens. I hope he will long be able to enjoy such a vicissitude with animation; and that his benevolence will not let it be any increase of his satisfaction to know that a great many younger people envy him.

I am, dear madam,

Yours, with the sincerest respect,

J. FOSTER.

LXVI. TO D. PARKEN, ESQ.

Bourton, 1808.

. . . . I was much surprised at your making a difficulty and a delicacy as to the character of the review about Fox's book. I was never aware there was the smallest question whether the tenor of the Eclectic Review should be most decidedly favourable or not to the general principles of liberty. The case is bad with us, with a vengeance, if we are to be vastly careful, and genteel, and timorous in telling what we think of the Charleses, James, Laud, and all the high church of those times, . . . if we must not

applaud *in toto*, and without any limitation whatever, the very noble spirit of freedom, which, beyond my expectations, exults through this admirable fragment of a history. We have read it twice, and some parts of it a third time; but also I have entirely forgotten all it contains, except the death of Argyle, and a few more such interesting episodes. Did you notice this passage—the death of Argyle? Excepting some Christian martyrs, a nobler exit and character cannot be found in all the history of time. To have one such man rise among us, I would gladly see all the emperors, kings, bishops, and reviewers (except two,) carried to the top of Mount Hecla, and——

. . . . I have read the admirable article in the Edinburgh Review on the paper of Cevallos. It is indeed superlative; but it does not want for absurdities; as, for instance, in representing that though Bonaparte will probably subdue the Spaniards, yet their having revolted will, even after they are subdued, tend to excite other revolts, in Germany, &c., &c., as if the concluding part of the spectacle, their prostration and punishment, must not, in all reason, be the most impressive part of the lesson, confirming, beyond any former campaign, the popular persuasion of his being invincible, and therefore of its being mere madness to provoke his vengeance. But a greater absurdity is the pretending that the whole British nation are consciously and intentionally abetting revolutionary principles, when any child may know that the business of *principles* is not thought of by one in ten; that the great motive is mere hatred and fear of Bonaparte, and that our aristocracy and government hate, and will not fail to endeavour and stipulate to prevent and repress, any thing revolutionary in the Spanish transactions. It is utterly absurd too to assume beforehand that the monarchy of Ferdinand, or Noodle, or Sooterkin, or whoever is to reign, will be of a very limited, restricted kind, and that there will be a grand reforming of all abuses. Who is to secure all these fine things? Are not the nobility now at the head of the insurrection? Are they not absolute in their power? Will they not still be thus at the head of affairs, in the event of the success of the insurrection? And in that way are the *people*, such as survive, to order and compel them to all these notable self-

denying ordinances? Indeed, who is foolish enough to dream, that a most ignorant populace, even if they *had* such power, know any thing about politics? Perhaps not one in ten of them knows that there *is* such a thing as representation in the world.

The absurdity is not less of talking what grand reforms we shall have *here* in consequence of it all, whether it fail or succeed. One does want to ask these talkers in what way these reforms are to be effected. Pray, how are the people—the general people—to be excited to demand any thing about reforms? Abominable abuses enough have been displayed, by Cobbett, by the Commissions of Inquiry, &c., &c., but what do the collective people think or care about it? And if the stupid corrupted herd did think and care, and demand, what *hold* have they on the government? The government will very probably laugh at their demanding, their palavering, their petitioning, and their grumbling. . . . What a strange inconsistency pervades the Edinburgh Review. But lately they were defending, against Cobbett, every, absolutely every, corruption, even formally and specifically that of *buying seats in parliament*.

It is very striking to observe how totally all reference to Providence is disowned by our political writers, and how trivial in their view would be any religious object which that power may possibly have in view in such a case.—As to the success of Bonaparte, I suppose there must, in fact, have been no great difference of opinion, since we have seen how easily Austria was quieted, perhaps by the Erfurth journey. With respect to the co-operation of our army, it seems never to strike any body what horror the Spaniards must, at bottom, have for a vast assemblage of heretics, men whom they deem children of the devil, going straight to him, and essentially endangering any cause in which they are employed. This feeling, not to mention insults which will inevitably be interchanged on the score of religion, will strangely damp the ardour of co-operation.

LXVII. TO D. PARKEN, ESQ.

Bourton, Feb. 28, 1809.

HONOURED SIR,—As far as the fact simply of your condescension is concerned, in giving me the opportunity of “protesting,” I am, as in duty bound, humbly grateful. . . . As to connecting Walker with G. Wakefield, in the way you propose, besides the silly vanity, to say the least of it, of eagerly stepping forward to proclaim that *we* will lend no sanction, no, not we, to reformers and their schemes,—just as if the system of corruption held its existence suspended on the favour and authority of the Eclectic Review, and just as if there was nobody else in all the church and state to denounce Walker and Wakefield—besides any consideration of this kind, the coupling them together in the manner you are for, would probably be incorrect in point of fact. I never read much of Wakefield, nor have any mighty impression of his talents or wisdom, but the precise thing I recollect most distinctly in his political references, is a short piece of argumentative ridicule (in a pamphlet in 1792 or 1793) of the notion of our *balanced* constitution, tending to show, indeed asserting, that a *real* and independent representation of the people would, by its very nature, soon put an end to monarchy, or at least reduce it to a thing of perfect insignificance. For what I can know, Walker might be a republican too; but in this book nothing of the kind appears. Since reading your letter, I have again read those two or three speeches at public meetings about the petitions, as it is in these that the political portion of the memoirs consists; and there is no insinuation in the slightest degree against monarchy. He distinctly specifies the three parts of the *constitution*, and fully avows his approbation of a constitution so formed . . . in a short, simple, and unaffected way, briefly deducing the history of its formation. But then he goes on to represent that this constitution, so judicious and so extolled, is a mere phantom, a mere name, unless it *do*, bonâ fide, consist of those three separate estates which have always been considered as composing it, both by commentators at home and commentators abroad. And he makes a series of singularly lucid, simplified, and forcible observations to show that if the representatives of the

people be substantially under the control, both as to their election and their legislative proceedings, of the crown and the aristocracy, there cannot be the three separate constituent powers required and meant by the universally received theory of the constitution, both among the vulgar and the learned. He dwells but briefly, and with no language of virulence, on the fact that the representation is at present utterly corrupt, in its election (as to a preponderating proportion) and in its consequent action,—no doubt presuming that this was quite apparent, and indeed it had been stated by other speakers in the meetings; but warmly urges a popular endeavour by petition to obtain the restoration of that kind of election which the constitution, by its whole nature and design, and by its specific provisions, had always intended; cautioning the people at the same time against every thing violent and rash. The business is done, as nearly as can be imagined, in the manner in which Locke would have done it. In the meeting and speech relating to "Economical Reform," he mentions a few items of corrupt and extravagant expenditure. In the large tract, "The Dissenter's Plea," he argues the matter in hand with great acuteness and exemplary liberality; indeed, in one or two places conceding full as much as a dissenter could consistently do; stoutly maintaining, however, that religion is not a thing within the magistrate's jurisdiction. I should have spoken more strongly of this essay, but in consideration of our "*neutrality*." This, however, is only a collateral argument, and not that on which he chiefly dwells in pleading for a repeal of the acts petitioned against. In short, in this book (and any where else, as far as I know) there is nothing to identify him with the revolutionary school; he was of the school of Locke, and those other names that, till of late years, have been generally held up as the standard and worthiest advocates of civil and religious liberty.

. . . . You say, "No good is to be got by forwarding the views, and adopting the spirit, of the Cobbetts and Burdetts. What are Cobbett and Burdett to us, or to the question,—except so far as they serve in the capacity of witnesses or advocates? There is a grand question before the nation, not merely at this or the other particular junc-

ture, but constantly and permanently ; and a very simple question, though it consist of several parts ; as, first, whether civil and religious liberty, with a firm and guarded security for it, be really a good thing for a people or not ; or whether all that has been said in its praise by reputed wise and good men, has been foolish babbling, or deliberate deception ; and all that has been suffered in its defence or recovery a mere sacrifice to a worthless idol ; and whether after all the millions of volumes' worth that has been written or speechified, and prayed against despotism, political and sacerdotal, this same despotism is, notwithstanding, the very thing most conducive to social happiness and improvement. Second, whether our *constitution* do or do not really mean that there shall be *real* representation of the people. Third, whether what is called the representative body be not now, and of late years, desperately and systematically corrupt ; and necessarily so, in consequence of its mode of election, and its length of duration ; and whether it does not palpably betray the very interests of which it is professedly the guardian, and with impunity laugh in the face of any complainant or remonstrant that tells it does so. Fourthly, whether it be not palpably proved, on an immense mass of evidence, some of the clearest and least *contradictable* of which happens to be brought forward by "the Cobbetts and the Burdetts," that throughout every part of the practical executive system, down to the smallest ramifications, the most enormous speculation, and, in plain speech, what would be called villainy in any other department than that of the state (that is, the conduct of the great public interests), does prevail, and continually increase. Now, these and similar matters, I suppose, form the prominent part of what we mean by politics. I suppose, too, that no honest man, that has at all attended to the subjects, can make a doubt how the truth stands on each of these points. And then I may surely ask, in the name of sense and decency, whether an honest and religious reviewer can have a question which side he should take, when the subject is placed in his way by the very topics of the book which he is to criticise. Because Burdett and Cobbett, and some men whose characters he does not approve, are among the

means of exposing a world of abominable proceedings, attributable, in a good measure, to the state of the representation,—do *therefore* these base proceedings, and this parliament, the protector or partaker of the baseness, instantly acquire a claim to the kind partiality and delicate forbearance of this honest and religious reviewer? It does not belong to his vocation to dwell long on the subject; and *I*, whose sentences and paragraphs of the kind are the present cause of complaint, and the cause of this most stupid sheetful of common-place and truism, *do* never dwell long, and *have* never dwelt long, on the subject. If passages of the length that I have made them, and intelligibly pointed against the system of corruption, cannot rightly have a place in the Eclectic Review, that Review ought avowedly and explicitly to confine itself to a limited and defined department of literature, and not let itself be understood, as it now is, to take a general cognizance of speculation and morals. It would no doubt be curious enough, just at this time, to forswear all reference to a subject which, taken on the wide scale, is convulsing the whole civilized world,—which is affecting the very essence of the public morals,—is practically drawing towards a very awful crisis, and which is interfering in numberless ways with our civil and religious condition, our exertions, our pecuniary means, and all our temporal prospects: but one good thing would be gained to the Review by the exclusion;—there would be no insinuated apologies for wickedness in high places; there would be no praises of such things as Custance; nor fawning, and at the same time, despised, attempts, to gratify bigots and plunderers by officious and uncalled-for disclaimers of such men as Walker and Wakefield, either of whom, at least the former of whom, would have lost his head sooner than have participated the wages of unrighteousness.

. . . . If by “attempts to advance particular interests” you really mean the general interest of truth and justice against all manner of corruptions, and against that kind of corruption in particular which any book in hand forces on our view—it is a noble plan for a free and Christian Review, to renounce any such design, and wonderfully useful it is

likely to be in consequence. Yes, he must be a most worthy and formidable *censor morum*, who dare not for his neck say a word against corrupt statesmen and prelatical bigots, or give the smallest hint of being aware that the House of Commons is anything else than a convocation of saints, so holy that we had need plant a guard on them to prevent angels stealing them into heaven, the moment they come out of doors at St. Stephen's.

Yours with profound respect,

J. F.

LXVIII. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Bourton, March 16, 1809.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am highly delighted by the probability—almost probability, of soon seeing you here. Though I cannot wish that your complaint may *not* be better, I do certainly and very strongly wish that while it is a little mending you may *think* it is not better: or that, at least, you may have prudence enough to conclude to forbear all public effort for some time. A permanent injury to the voice, to say no worse, may be the consequence of forcing it during the continuance of the organic disability. Come and stay a few weeks; the very change of air may be useful; and both I and wife should be exceedingly glad to retain you till it be fully safe for you to attack the obdurate Battersea consciences again. Leave the pagan catiffs awhile to their reflections, and to a change of ministry, while you take a change of air.

. . . . Your letter contains some very just reproof, and some very foolish explanation, of my unconscionable length of silence. I feel, beyond all comparison, more mortification and irksome sense of debility about intellectual faculty and performance, than I do self-complacency. And I must still and ever protest that my neglect of writing is not to be attributed to decline of friendship.* It is owing to an inveterate, and I now believe unchangeable, antipathy to

* "You address so many pages to the public, that your former correspondents ought to excuse you, and more than excuse you, if they should

all writing; an antipathy which I may truly say, and am sorry for its being true, accompanies me through every paragraph or sentence that I ever write. It is with a feel-

seem to be neglected, and even abandoned in consequence of your far extended lucubrations.

"I have said too much; a certain portion of your former correspondents claim, at least, an occasional notice—and it would not misbecome you, if you granted what they claim a little oftener. He is the fittest man to teach and discipline the community, who himself observes all the proprieties of life. But that Maria!—Maria repels the charge, and asks, 'whether correspondents did not complain before the alleged monopoly took place.' I will settle the business, then, in another way. J. F. has not the privilege of numbering among his would-be correspondents, men of adequate intellectual strength; the most Herculean among them can barely appreciate and relish his paragraphs; they can make him no return in kind. Hence his interest in them becomes feeble; if he seizes his pen, with a view to their individual gratification, his mind sinks towards their level by an oppressive sympathy; or, if he keeps up to his own standard, he writes what ought to be printed, without acquiring either the fame or the emolument which he might have acquired by printing. Here, it is obvious, benevolent as well as selfish motives may influence, since the time occupied in writing a superior letter might enable J. F. to instruct an author and his readers, through the medium of the *Review* whose sale his pen appears to have promoted. Yet this said J. F. might perhaps be suitably reminded, that a letter might please and improve which should involve no labour, and display no genius. I will not prose on this plain subject. *Verbum sat.*

"It is sometimes remarked, that your critiques have too little reference to the article before you; that they are deficient in analysis and citation; and that thus, while they exhibit the reviewer, they obscure the author. This censure applies eminently to your critique on the *Chronicle of the Old*. The work is disposed of rather uncivilly, and every thing gives way to your reflections on Hispano-Anglican politics. For my own part, I would not exact much more than you have assigned to the work, except on the score of precedent; especially as your reflections are so accurate, and so much in point. Perhaps, indeed, the circumstance of our having stipulated nothing in favour of Protestantism, detached from the mass of your reflections, may be plausibly vindicated against your implied animadversion; but taking the article as a whole, it so well asserts *general principles*, and so completely confounds the pseudo-patriotic declamations on behalf of the Quixotic effort to aid a people, who to this hour have no just conceptions of liberty, that I read it with animated pleasure. What must we think of Sheridan and other opposition men, who bawled so loud for these roused but not illuminated Dons, who, after all, have treated their English protectors with so much indifference and so much contempt?

"Who is to review 'Zeal without Innovation?' It is calculated to produce a rich harvest of theological wormwood. With some serious deductions, I admire '*Cælebs*;' hope it will be reviewed by you. Rowland Hill's *Lovegood* should be held up for comparison with that *orderly*

ing approaching to hatred, that I do at any time, on any occasion or subject, take up the pen. Even the small wares in the way of criticism, therefore, that I have compelled myself to manufacture, have cost me more self-denial than Henry's or Gill's Expositions, or the whole immense works of Calmet, ever cost their respective authors. This aversion would diminish if I acquired any greater facility; but I do not, except in point of being correct, nor I suppose now ever shall.

Do you come next week, and that will be better than quires of writing; I mean *my* writing, for I have lost none of the animated pleasure with which I receive a letter from you.

Coles has just lost his infant. . . . It is too true that he is, as you say, a better man than I am; I hope to get before him notwithstanding. . . . Parken is still at you, he says, about the Review, whenever he sees you. Why do you not buckle to? I repeat once more, that it will be useful both to the Review and yourself. And it is the more necessary to have a complete crew of dissenters, as I am persuaded the churchmen auxiliaries, excepting perhaps J—— of H——, will by degrees, and rather soon, declare off. We are taking a tone of freedom which they will not be able to endure, and in which they will, besides, feel it impolitic to have been known in any manner to coalesce

parson Barlow. What is the starched priest by the side of the cordial pastor? Had that Rowland left out half his controversies and purified his dialect, his work in point of utility, would have borne away the palm. In a *large* circle it will, with all its imperfections.

" I have not seen the Quarterly, which is to rival the Edinburgh. In religion, I suppose, it will have the praise of not being so bad; but in politics, I anticipate the reverse of all I delight to read in the Edinburgh.

" I was impressed while reading the last number of the Eclectic, and indeed I am often impressed with the importance of cultivating and drawing forth the mental talents of the sanctuary. The barrister and a hundred more are reviling the *class* without mercy; opposed to them are the vapid, or the violent, or the illiterate; when shall the right race come?

" Again I exhort you to prepare for your fourth edition, and to revise your *Essay on Time*. Moreover, I recommend you to study the signs of the times, so as to start a suitable subject, in the discussion of which you shall bear down, with Napoleonic energy, on the host summoned by folly and by sin."—*The Rev. Joseph Hughes to Mr. Foster; Battersea, March, 1809.*

with. They have, it seems, been warned not to do it, by the author of *Zeal without Innovation*. Now, as a real, positive, absolute, peremptory secret—and which, for the present at least, you must keep so—Parken has informed me that *Achilles* himself is poisoning his tremendous lance against this ill-fated, officious, bravo champion of the church. We shall see whether its point of steel has become less deadly from rusting so long at Leicester. . . . I hope the article will come soon, will be long, and in the best manner. I do not expect to see *Cælebs* in any connection with the Review. The article about the *Old*, though open, I am fully aware, to various objections—some of which I could have obviated if I had not been severely driven for time—is perhaps the one by which I should expect to produce more good effect than any other.

LXIX. TO D. PARKEN, ESQ.

Bourton, June 2, 1809.

. . . . Rose's is really an entertaining book. I was very mad when I saw the price marked at £1 5s., but, on coming to read a piece of it, I found that George had worked very hard for his money. He does indeed transcribe and translate most plentifully, and charges you for acres of white paper; but, at the same time, he gives you such a sample of industrious grubbing among old records, manuscripts, and moss-covered statutes, as you shall probably never live to see again. He has certainly refuted Fox, as to some slight historical particulars, especially as to his assertion and reasonings that the introduction of popery into England was *not* a leading (or *the* leading) object of James's policy. As far as I have yet looked, there is nothing that bears with any particular force on Fox's political principles, excepting his partiality to the Whigs, whom George proves to have been as confounded villains about, as their opponents. The whole job is done with perspicuity, and prodigious good humour; and the whole job tends to prove the folly of any man's pretending to write history, as it shows what enormous toil of research

is necessary to ascertain conclusively a diminutive portion of the facts, of a diminutive portion of the annals, of a diminutive portion of the two-legged insects that swarm on this earth,—*if* indeed even this sample is conclusive, and if some still more effectual grubber should not grub up even a confutation of George himself.*

. . . . Now that I recollect—about Hall's composition—that excellence which you praised, and which he has in a very high degree, of making brief strong sentences, completing the sense in each—is sometimes carried to a fault. He makes, in some places, a number of laconic propositions in succession, which are quite independent of one another, but which ought to have been contrived into a texture. Or, to go from the business of weaving to the more dignified one—fighting—he attacks with a number of single, separate, bold savages, whom he should have disciplined and combined into a phalanx. In this quality of writing we are all beaten hollow by the old workmen, such as Hooker and Jeremy Taylor; the latter is just now more in my memory. You shall find him preserve a strict connection through a whole folio page; a sentence shall be a complete thought, but it shall, at the same time, be an integral and inseparable portion of—not an accumulation, but a combination, of thoughts, which are assisting one another by a linked and consentaneous action to prove or illustrate some one truth. The figure is much less than sufficiently strict if I say that there is one long identical rope, and that every thought, however richly dressed, is placed close behind its fellow and giving a stout pull. From the little I have yet read, I am strongly inclined to think this said Jeremy is the most *completely* eloquent writer in our language. There is a most manly and graceful ease and freedom in his composition, while a strong intellect is working logically through every paragraph, while all manner of beautiful images continually fall in as by felicitous accident. . . .

* Such a "*grubber*" was Serjeant HAYWOOD. Vide Contributions, &c., Vol. I. p. 160 (Eclectic Review, July, 1809), and p. 176 (Eclectic Review, Dec. 1811).

LXX. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Bourton, July 4, 1809.

MY DEAR FRIEND, We were much disappointed at not seeing you at the association time. We had the first tangible gooseberries, &c. &c., prepared to regale you, and were representing in our imaginations how we should be ourselves mentally and morally regaled. But we did not wonder at not having seen you, when we afterwards learnt the limits of your time, what your plan was, and how you were accompanied.

This chance being gone by, is there none of your passing this way to Bristol? But for something like a wish to visit London within the space of half a year or so, I should be for trying to make an inducement of my own wish to accompany you to Bristol. . . . If I should conclude for Bristol myself, I shall venture to urge the plan. But really I have passed so idle-a spring and summer that I think I must not venture so far from my books. Among those books I am muddling on in a poor way. Many of them I never look into; some of them when I do look into I cannot understand (per ex. Cudworth, Locke, Hume, &c.); the bits and sections I read, without order, in others, I utterly forget; and, in short, but for the name and notion of the thing, I might nearly as well have no books at all;—excepting indeed those with pictures in, which I find nearer my taste and capacity. Partly by opportunity I have lately been led into a fancy for possessing myself of the most noted divines of the established church, and have bought the principal works of Hooker, Cudworth, Taylor (Jeremy), and Barrow, and I have read enough of each to be able to talk about them, and to praise them in the customary lingo of criticism, without talking altogether without book. I want a few more of them, especially Chillingworth and Leslie. I apprehend our dissenters are not sufficiently acquainted with these antique gentlemen. Perhaps we are mortified at their striking superiority over all the non-cons. of that or the subsequent age. I have read more of Taylor than of the others that I have enumerated, and certainly should soon have discovered him to be passing eloquent and able in every respect, if I had never once heard of his name;

—very far beyond even such men as Bates and Howe. . . . Reading such authors, and some others that I have looked into of late, tends to make one shrink from the thoughts of writing. To say nothing of the humiliating consciousness as to the degree of talent, one is made to feel that, in point of *knowledge*, one has a world to learn, before one can pretend to write in any commanding manner. I am trying, in the teeth of indolence, debility, and a wretched memory, to read and study hard, and will hope to become competent to something or other in time, that may considerably serve the cause of religion.

I am vexed to hear you again declare off from being a reviewer, after I have told you so many times of its palpable advantages, in a literary respect. I cannot forbear to renew my exhortations on the subject. It helps to toss abroad your manner of thinking and composing, and therefore to help your riddance from any bad habit that is in danger of becoming fixed and unalterable. I am bound in duty, therefore, once more to give and inculcate neglected good advice. Your last Tract Society Report is freer than any thing you have written before, from your literary besetting sin; indeed, it appeared to me about wholly free. I am always gratified to think of your various and active utility; but, at the same time, you ought to set it down in your purposes, and the train of your studies, to do something that shall continue to preach and persuade after you shall have become finally silent. And this, not for that bubble, fame, but to protract, as far as possible, a beneficial agency.

LXXI. TO D. PARKEN, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,—It would be some consolation to poor authors if they could know how reviewers plague one another. And truly it may be made a question how far that calling can be a good one which involves so much irregularity, idleness, threatening, reproach, disregard of promises, and consequent want of confidence and co-operation among its agents. Only, however, set aside the morality of the employment, and all

this may be very good for giving it *effect*, for depravity is allowed to be one of the best whetstones of ability. What would become, I wonder, of our preparing of vitriol for authors and their books, if we were always talking to one another in the style of Moravians at a love-feast, and handing round candies and cowslip wine? This would be a poor mental diet for the noble profession of tomahawks. The more we can contrive to snarl and quarrel among ourselves, the more will our hands be in, for the benefit of authors, the edification of our readers, and the sale of our Review.

. . . . I hope you have not engaged Coleridge's Poems, soon to be published, to any of your gang. I shall be eager to see them, and should review them *con amore*. He is the poet that will overtop all his contemporaries.

. . . . Jeremy Taylor will never more be read but by the curious few. He is too learned, too antiquated, and has too much of logical technicality, to be ever again a popular author. He is further removed from popular language, a good deal, than even Barrow, and incomparably further than Tillotson. So far as he shall be read, the only harm the critic on him has to prevent, is of that kind which Hall describes so well in characterizing Tillotson's and Barrow's theology,*—and, the possibility of being tempted, under the notion of being ingenious and brilliant, to imitate, and produce a gross, conceited affectation in imitating, his rich novelties of phrase, his arbitrary combinations of words—the result, in him, of an infinite variety of particularities of thought—such analogies, antitheses, and allusions, as no mind could have been capable of, that was not full of all manner of learning, and teeming with all manner of fancy.

. . . .

LXXII. TO D. PARKEN, ESQ.

Bourton, October 25, 1809.

. The speaking in the personation on the stage intends, at least, and assumes, to be something more than

* HALL's Works, Vol. iv. p. 134 (*Review of Gisborne's Sermons*).

pure recitation ; it will not suffer itself to be considered as merely free and memoriter reading ; and its being so considered would destroy the greatest part of the fascination. It aims to impose itself on the fancy as at the least some middle thing between mere recitation, and an utterance of the living sentiments of real characters in a real situation. Indeed, that which it necessarily aims at, and by means of which it must captivate, has always appeared to us to involve so gross and monstrous an absurdity, that we are persuaded, if there shall ever come an age of sound sense, the *acted* drama will be contemned for being essentially irrational, setting aside all moral and religious considerations. For ourselves, we will own, that the suggestions and questions naturally arising in our minds,—“What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?” Who and what are you, that are vociferating these words of passion? What business have you to be in any passion on those boards, and to be taking all those postures and gesticulations about it, when you know the whole is a fiction, at which you are going to laugh at supper? And if you are in no passion at all, any more than you will then be over your wine and ratafia, what a ridiculous thing it is to be thus whining, writhing, and tossing, to keep up such a miserable sham! We will own that such suggestions have always been to us a plentiful damper to any portion of that sympathy and rapture we have so often heard of.*

LXXIII. TO WALTER SHEPPARD, ESQ.

Bourton, December 25, 1809.

DEAR SIR,—A late letter from Miss A. gives me information respecting the state of your health, which, in common with every one of your friends, I am very sorry to

* “From J. Foster, Oct. 25, 1809, intended as a part of a critique on Plumptre; preserved as indicating a curious trait in his character—the absolute control possessed by his judgment over his fancy, while that fancy, at the same time, is above all others electrically vivid and energetic. The fancy of other men is often the tyrant of their passions—his, the servant of his understanding.”—*Note by Mr. Parken*; vide Contributions, &c., to the Eclectic Review, vol. I. p. 345, on Plumptre’s Defence of the Stage.

hear. I have been so accustomed, in my own mind, and in speaking of you among our friends, to congratulate you on possessing an activity and an animated enjoyment of life, very unusual at your age, that I have very seldom anticipated for you a time when these would necessarily fail.

I have promised myself, almost as a matter of course, that whenever I should see you again I should find you just as before. But at last the time is come for the Disposer of life and health to intimate to you, and your surrounding friends, that he has a sovereign right to resume what he has so long bestowed.

Nevertheless, Miss A. B.'s account leads me to hope that your life may be spared to your friends yet a while longer : and I sincerely join with them all in wishing it might be even for a number of years—though I do not know whether, as to yourself, this should be the wish of true friendship, since every month and year through which we all wish your life may be protracted, would impose an exercise of your patience and resignation, and painfully remind you of that past vigour which you will not expect to possess any more on earth. Happily, the dermination of this concern lies with the wisest and best of all your friends, and happily, too, you can rejoice that it does so. It is gratifying to me, though not at all surprising, to be informed that your mind is so tranquil and resigned. You can look back with thankfulness on a long life, during which you have been favoured with prosperity, with affectionate friends, and with a most uncommon share of health and cheerfulness, and during which you have not forgotten to whom you owed all these blessings, and (which is a subject for still much greater thankfulness) you now look forward to an infinitely longer and better life, to be conferred by the same divine Benefactor. To be able thus to look back, and thus to look forward, with profound emotions of gratitude to that Benefactor at every step of the contemplation, will inspire a joy which I trust will sustain you during your hours of greatest languor and weakness, and during all the remainder of your journey of life, whether longer or shorter. What a delightful resource is piety at such a season, when it is an *old* resource, instead of being then sought for the first time. It is not a trifling consolation neither, that all your friends

near at hand will cordially and anxiously contribute to alleviate the pressure of affliction, and that the best of them will petition our supreme Friend to make it light. I will hope to hear that you are considerably reviving, and likely to remain among them a while longer, and afford them pleasure without feeling life a burden yourself. I will hope to have myself the pleasure of seeing you yet again, and feeling some of that cheerfulness in your company, which I have scarcely ever been in it without enjoying. Whatever may be the divine dispensation concerning your health and life, it will assuredly be a merciful one. You yourself believe that it will, and this faith will be precious in every oppressive hour.

I most cordially wish you the recovered strength necessary for making your life, if protracted, more pleasing than painful, or the gracious support requisite for sustaining with Christian fortitude a prolonged illness which may terminate in a removal to a better world. . . .

LXXIV. TO THE REV. JOHN FAWCETT.

Bourton, January 7, 1810.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your letter did not, and could not, fail to awaken some of the most pleasing sentiments that I can ever feel, recollections of ancient friendship, and assurances that this friendship includes no principle of decay. I immediately recognized your hand, and was glad to see it; I had often wished, during the past half year, to hear from you again; but I knew you are at all times busy in the most useful engagements. I wish myself also to be usefully busy; but I would entreat you not to repeat such expressions as that in your letter of being “unwilling to intrude too much on my time;” such expressions have quite a mortifying and irksome effect, as coming from a most respected old friend, whose own time is employed to a much more valuable purpose, and, I am afraid, with much more unremitted industry.

I find myself naturally adopting such words as “old” and “ancient,” in referring to the earlier periods of our

friendship. Does not that period appear to *you* a very long time since? and have you not half a feeling, sometimes, as if you were growing old? I have, at times, very much of this kind of consciousness. It is not the being aware of any physical or mental decline, but a remoteness in my retrospects—the disappearance by death of so many of my elders, and even co-evals—the dispersion and changed condition of my early companions—the alteration of a great part of the economy of my feelings—the five feet ten inches altitude of persons whom I recollect as infants when *I* first reached that altitude—and the very sound and appearance of the word *forty* (to the number meant in which word I shall soon have a very particular relation)—these, and I suppose many more things, concur to make me feel how far I have gone already past the meridian hour of the short day of life. Nor do I in the least deplore this fact, in any other way than regretting the miserably deficient improvement of a life of which the best part is now gone.

This grand consideration of making the noblest use of life will be very animating and consoling to you, amidst a measure of labour which would otherwise be really oppressive to you. You will have the gratification of feeling that each week that passes away is filled with your very best efforts, in one of the most important departments of human industry. I earnestly wish your health may be habitually firm enough for your office, and that the health of your most intimate associate may be firm enough to bear her part of the economy. I am sorry to hear your unfavourable account of it, but wish to hope that by this time you have some more decisive indications of its being soon to be re-established. She must sustain a most ample share, indeed, of your domestic and even professional cares; and if it were only for your sake, I wish that such an important “help-meet” may recover, and long retain her vigour and spirits; but also for her own sake, and for that of her children, I most sincerely wish she may have all the strength and animation which she possessed at those times, which I often recollect, when I used to frequent her house and her company, and derive vivacity from seeing so much of it displayed by her. Your children, I trust, will somewhat more than repay your incessant cares for them, by their affection, docility, and

hopeful dispositions and faculties. The larger number of them, I believe, are boys, and I continue to wish that the larger number of *them* may sometime turn out *preachers*, since there is no cause on earth so important as religion, since there is no chance of this cause being extensively served but by dissenters, and since it is exceedingly desirable that the dissenting teachers should spring from among the youth of a liberal and literary education.

I am glad your respected father does not experience so much of the infirmities of age as to prevent him from feeling great interest and pleasure in prosecuting his commentary. It appears to me an employment most happily chosen to beguile those infirmities, as well as to crown the conclusion of life with a peculiar utility. No doubt he feels it, next to the exercises of devotion, his most pleasing and even exhilarating resource, amidst those visitations of pain and languor from which the age of seventy can seldom be entirely exempt. I cannot wonder that your mother, as she is, I believe, some years older than your father, should show the evident signs of decline within a single year; but I hope, especially for his sake, that she is yet appointed to continue an inhabitant of the earth a good while longer. My imagination has often sought out the site of their house, and represented the calm and devout habits of its possessors. . . .

Mr. Greaves, with the exception of the temporary infelicity arising from the loss you advert to, is, perhaps, among our early friends, the individual on whose lot and progress Providence has borne fully as auspicious an aspect as on any other. *We three* have all of us the strongest reason to be thankful to that most gracious Providence. And, considering our age, and now established principles, views, and habits, it is no slight satisfaction to hope that we are now passed safe beyond the most unsteady, hazardous, and tempting periods, feelings, and scenes of life. Not that we can ever be safe but by divine preservation; but still it is no trifling advantage that some of the most pernicious influences of a bad world have necessarily, as to us, lost very much of their power.

I cannot but be gratified at hearing so favourable an account of my father and mother. I should like to see

them, and all of you again; but a consideration of the melancholy of parting, the enormous expense of travelling so far, with many other considerations, prevent me from forming any plan or positive intention on the subject. I deeply regret the condition of the manufacturers and the poor in your neighbourhood: and the more as there seems no prospect, in the political state of the world, of any material change in favour of commerce. As to Spain, I suppose that no one, calculating even on merely military principles, has now much expectation of its success, and those who, in addition, speculate on the designs of Providence and the prophecies of the downfall of popery, have reasons from that quarter also to anticipate the ultimate success of the most extraordinary mortal who, though a pretended papist himself, is substantially destroying, for some time past, the power of Popery. I am most anxious for the fall of Babylon, both on the Continent and in our own country, in which she still maintains no small degree of her state, and power, and bigotry.

The business of reviewing has been the chief use I have made of the pen for a good while past, and probably will for some time to come. I mean to addict myself a good deal to other composition for a while; and, in the meantime, I consider this reviewing as the best possible kind of discipline for my improvement in composition, while also I am acquiring a little of different kinds of knowledge by the reading which attends it.

. The review of Crabbe's Poems in the January number is by Mr. Hall, but is only the second article he has ever contributed, and, I am afraid, may not soon be followed by any other: he has such a strange and unfortunate aversion to writing. My domestic situation is emphatically complacent.

LXXV. TO D. PARKEN, ESQ.

Bourton.

. There is a very good show of ability and knowledge in the Quarterly Review. The article about Spain

is by some person better acquainted with the actual state of that country than any of the political critics. It involves, however, no refutation of the notions of Cobbett and us; on the contrary, it tends more fully than any thing I have seen to prove the necessity of an absolute and total demolition of every part of the government, the prostration to the very dust of every institution throughout the country, in order to create any union and prolongation of the national energy. I own it goes a good way, at the same time, towards showing that this was impracticable, and that therefore the whole design was preposterous, and the English but fools to encourage it. Southey's article may do good, by gaining the attention to the Mission, of persons whose attention would never have been gained by the professedly religious publications, that is, as he will foolishly have it, the Methodistical.* But how ill he writes, between the concerted quaintness of his style, and the snarlish dogmatism of his spirit! Do you know anything about the party, the editor, or the journeymen of this undertaking?

. . . . I have not the means of learning, further than by internal evidence, what you do for the Eclectic Review. The article about Hannah More was very decently done; part of the first page being unintelligible, as should always be the case, when the article is to be of some length, in order to give it, at the outset, a kind of oracular and mysterious dignity.

With great and melancholy interest I have been running through a good part of the New Annual Register for the years 1791-2-3-4, &c., and contemplating the enormous expense of talent, grand achievement, and life, under circumstances where one clearly sees the moral impossibility of doing any good. Between the depravity of the French populace and the effects inevitably produced by the coalition of the hostile powers, one sees *how* the greatest talents and virtues that ever came on this earth would have failed to establish the French people in a state of liberty and happiness.

* Vide *Quarterly Review*, Feb. 1809, Art. XVII. "Periodical Accounts relative to the Baptist Missionary Society," &c.

LXXVI. TO D. PARKEN, ESQ.

Bourton.

. As to the phrase "gnashing of teeth," you should be more discreet than to defend it; it is quite enough to have inserted it, and it is more than enough, in condemning it, to say, that it is an attempt to turn into a witticism one of the expressions used in the Bible to describe the most dreadful of all things in the universe,—the agonies inflicted by the divine vengeance in another world. As to *my* often adverting to the great wicked spirit, it does not become me to say that I do not *too* often and too lightly do this; but there is, notwithstanding, a very material difference between alluding too lightly to him as the prompter of many fooleries as well as many crimes,—and alluding with the same indefensible lightness to the express, inspired, description of infernal suffering. Have you any guess who wrote the admirable review of Sydney Smith in the *Christian Observer*? Has Hall undertaken any thing more? An excellent subject for him would be, when it comes to a volume, Coleridge's "*Friend*,"—excepting what is political in it. Do you read it? He is a marvellously original and subtle thinker. Appearances are favourable thus far as to religion; and I hope he is one of the few geniuses that the aforesaid Satan does not inspire, and will not be allowed to seize. If Hall should not choose, I might have the ambition of trying my own hand on this "*Friend*," but Hall is the proper man.

. The "four supporters" are no doubt oracular men, one and all; but I can tell those supporters that it is with the dissenters that the work will ultimately stand or fall, and with the dissenters it has but barely, even now, recovered its character for spirit and freedom, after its merge in that slough of low sycophancy to church and state through which these "supporters" had the wisdom to make it go, in the commencement. Talk of *me* "hanging them;" why, they were within the smallest trifle of hanging *themselves*, and would have done it, if I and Co. had not slackened the noose by means of a quantity of that very independence which these very same rescued and living men bawl out will be the hanging of them.—As it is totally

out of the question to think of really pleasing both the two great parties, the policy is to lean towards the dissenters—they are the rising party, and they are the final resource and hope of any thing which is to pretend to freedom of thinking; and the “supporters” know, or may know, that, do what they please, it will be absolutely impossible to satisfy permanently the church people with any thing that would deserve the approbation of independent men. But it is not simply the church and state people, as it should seem, but the *high* church and state, that these supporters are so intimidated at: the class of persons, I suppose, that cannot endure to have it said that there has ever been corruption among statesmen, or intolerance and persecution among bishops; i. e. who must not allow a reference to the most notorious facts of our history, even when the transactions and characters of that history are the subjects formally in hand. But why did not this right worthy class of readers patronize the Review at first, when it was so anxiously cooked to their taste?

LXXVII. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Bourton, June 28, 1810.

. . . . A residence in a place like this is subject to such a perfect sameness of occurrences, actions, and feeling, that one really has a consciousness, at any time all round the year, of having nothing at all to write about to a friend at a distance. You can form no notion of it in the remotest degree, in your active sphere, and various expeditions, pursuits, and societies. The truth is, that my faculties suffer very materially, in point of vigour and dexterity, and even in point of mere knowledge, by this extreme recluseness of life. But this is no neighbourhood to mend the matter. Society here, with the exception of one or two individuals, is all miserable trifling and small talk. These observations involve or imply no complaint whatever of my immediate domestic society; that is soft, complacent, tender; and it is improving too, so far as this very softness does not tend to preclude the

harder subjects and the severer exertions of thought from social converse. But, in the midst of affectionate complacency, and the numerous topics of more facile discussion, my wretchedly indolent mind is reluctant to set itself in earnest, to dialogues (in which it would not be left without co-operation) on the questions that contribute most to harden and invigorate the intellectual man. We read socially a great deal; among other books, almost all those that I review.—As far as I read or study solitarily, I am just as desultory and unsystematic as I have always been—but shall *not* be to the end of the chapter. . . .

It is an interesting, though too rapid, sketch you give of your northern adventures. We must have the deficiency made up by oral recitals, a little while hence.—I am glad you are not yet too old and sapless to be delighted with recollecting, on the spot, your morning of life, and its interests. I have myself but little of this capability now. Notwithstanding the acknowledged and not-to-be-forgotten beauties of *Todmorden Vale*, I have no wish to revisit the scene of early life, but on account of those two old persons you saw, and half a dozen others, several of them of nearly the same antiquity. I am very glad those two have once seen you; they always think of you as a benefactor to them, in having been so to me; and as long as they live they will be gratified to have at last a defined image of you in their minds.—I find my immediate relationships at prodigious extremes when I turn in thought from those two venerable persons, whose joint ages amount to at least seventy-nine years a-piece, to Jack here, that is scarcely six months old. He is a healthy vigorous fellow, and occupies quite as much of people's time and attention as he deserves. As to "education," if he live to be its progressive subject, it may be much better than the ordinary quality of that article, and yet far enough from "perfect." If, however, it could be near perfection, I know too much of human nature to be very sanguine.

LXXVIII. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Bourton, 1810.

.... You say, there are "materials lying within you (as well as around you) inefficient, and but little known."*
 Why are they inefficient? I must take the liberty of saying, you are bound to *make* them efficient. Were they beyond the moon or so, there were no duty in the case; but as lying within you, they are in some way or other of the nature of a talent, for which you are made accountable. For the rest, your dissertation, or rather, as

* "That homily of mine on the inefficiency of much good material, was suggested, perhaps, by a reference to certain efforts of my own, which, if the subjects of them would allow them free course, would exhibit a glorious result. I feel that I could instruct, and elevate, and soften, and fill with joy, were the minds of my auditors willing to be so impressed. For not only am I supplied, as all who have the Scriptures are, with ample topics,—I often *feel* them, and my heart dictates to my tongue what *some* would hear with strong emotion. Will you remind me, that the triumph is to achieve where one must melt the ice, and hew the rock asunder? I know it; but you have told us in terms, probably, too discouraging, that the hope of achieving thus should not be sanguine. Not that any of us moral champions display all the ardour, and persevering prowess, that the case requires. The generality try the power of means but faintly. We have reasoners, and declaimers, and founders of societies, and promoters of Christian missions; but where are the specimens of self-denial, of heavenly-mindedness, of universal sanctity, and of apostolic fervour? Why should we quote a Fletcher, a Newton, and a Pearce, as superior specimens? It may be said, These men, in addition to their piety, possessed peculiar talent, which not only enabled them to express their sentiments with uncommon felicity, but created around them a sort of moral element favourable to the reception of all that piety might dictate. They had a certain richness and susceptibility, the immediate gifts of Heaven. Still, if piety were intense, we have surely men of intellectual vigour, and fancy, and sentiment, who might be expected to lay at the feet of Zion's Monarch far nobler spoils. In my own instance, I refer many disappointments to the want of consistency and sacred glow.

"But though the experience of an individual might have suggested the theme, that theme is suggested daily by what one perceives in every direction. Nothing accomplishes all that it tends to accomplish. Much of our expenditure is apparent waste; we are doomed to sow in the sand. I would infer hence the necessity of redoubling our exertions; for if doing our utmost, we effect little,—doing less, we shall perhaps effect nothing. That something is effected, I believe, and know.

"Then want an argument for a future state, and how exultant should that hope be which Christianity inspires."—*Rev. Joseph Hughes to Mr. Foster, July 24, 1810.*

I suspect, your philippic, against the circle in which you move, is too sadly just. They do not derive from your presence half, nay, not a tenth part of the advantage they might, and would, if they were thoughtful and docile. But you abdicate, emphatically, the right to complain, when you advert to that most stupendous instance of but partial efficiency—Him that shone a light in darkness, and “the darkness comprehended it not.” At the same time, each of the “lesser lights” should be carefully trimmed, and every possible accession made to its means of burning and shining, however small a sphere of illumination it may be able to create in so dark and thick an atmosphere.

LXXIX. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Bourton, November 21, 1810.

MY DEAR FRIEND, If I had been in the habit of writing to Battersea twice a week, I suppose an hour would quite suffice to run on a sheetful; the longer the interval, the less one seems to know what one has to say. . . . My wife and the brat are in good health. The latter grows, frisks, and indicates the decent symptoms of approaching to something of an intelligent nature; though it is, to be sure, rather a slender sign to be so full of exceeding wonderment at the knocking of a hammer, the ringing of glasses, or a blazing stick. But doubtless I, and even you, were once at this very same pass. He is degenerate, physically, from the genuine Yorkshire quality, for he does not walk yet, at an age at which I, and three more of us in succession, were able to march and fight. His elders keep strictly at home, save that I frequently go out hither or thither of a Sunday. . . . One of the places I have had most frequently to go to, is a town about ten miles hence, where one worthy individual, a tradesman, has been the mean of commencing, and putting in a most hopeful train, a new preaching establishment. Within a few months, a very neat meeting-house, to hold perhaps four hundred people, has been raised and covered in, and is expected to be opened at the beginning of January. The man's

character and intentions are so unquestionably excellent, and some such undertaking is so evidently desirable in a rather large and very heathenish town (Winchcomb, seven miles on this side Cheltenham), that he has received the most marked approbation from all us zealous people in his neighbourhood, and easily obtained a number of us in rotation to preach in his house, till the meeting should be raised. He is sanguine, and I think reasonably, that the expense (near £1000) will be so far discharged, as in two or three years not to leave a very oppressive debt. Himself, his father-in-law (a monied farmer, but too far off to attend in the place), and a surgeon and apothecary in the town, have begun with £50 a-piece toward the liquidation, and the good man has met with more than the accustomed liberality in the few places that he has yet laid under contribution. The meeting-house is now vested in trustees by a deed, of which one permanent condition is, the freedom for what is called mixed communion, though this projector and conductor is himself a Baptist. Having gone thus far on such a local subject, I am forcibly reminded how much this particularity must look like the communication of an inhabitant of a retired dull part of the country, where nothing is doing and little is known, who quite forgets that his friend lives in and near the metropolis, where the succession and quality of events is such as to make the raising of a new meeting house an exceedingly diminutive matter for talk, if it were even in his own neighbourhood.

. . . . It was a very serious disappointment not to see you here. . . . But when you were given up, it remained among my expectations, that I should before now see you in London. But, not to mention what is centripetal on the score of affection, I have each month seemed to have something indispensable to be done, at home, and not a sufficiently definite business in London. I did, however, very positively resolve and promise for a fortnight at Frome and Bristol neighbourhood; but when the intended time for that came, I had reviews to write, money to earn, and a long-pledged excursion with Coles for a few days to Worcester, where we experienced the most friendly attentions, and indulged an active curiosity in the direction of

Malvern hills, and other noble scenes. I am fully convinced, that as an intellectual manufacturer I shall need occasional change of scene, for the purpose of varying my ideas, renovating my images of beautiful nature, and avoiding the total loss of all social dexterity and pliancy of mind. My cultivation of personal religion is aided essentially by the preaching habits, which conduce also a little to keep up my acquaintance with mankind.

Studies, so to call them, continue miserably desultory; and take most wonderful care to wind along the lower, smoother grounds, meandering in all manner of directions, to avoid the high and rugged regions of metaphysic, direct science, &c. In all manner of fault, however, I am, for my age, wonderfully sanguine in my hopes of amendment, and zealous in all the resolutions relative to all the amendments. If there be one point I am less perfectly confident about, it is the practice of buying books. In this point, since I wrote last, I have been greatly tempted, and have moderately sinned. When I last visited the old tempter there were Sir W. Jones's works—and above all, the Annual Register, from its commencement, about 1757, to the end of the century, &c., &c., &c. All these and more I was *destined* to take off, the last particularly, being very cheap, allowed no hesitation, as I had no work whatever to refer to for any of the historical facts of the period through which even I myself have lived.

LXXX. TO JOHN SHEPPARD, ESQ.

1810, 1811.

. . . . I was lately very powerfully and suddenly struck (though certainly not for the first time) with the simple idea—Now, there is some one state of character and plan of action the very *best possible* to me, under all the circumstances of my age, measure of mental faculties, and means within my reach; the one plan that will please the Governor of the world the most, that will be the most pleasing to look back upon at the hour of death, the most satisfactory to hear referred to at the day of judgment; and can I be

so infatuated as not instantly and most earnestly to endeavour to ascertain what is that plan, and then most zealously devote myself to its execution? This idea strongly recurs to me in writing to my respected friend and my expressing it to you in the form in which it struck myself, does not by any means imply that such reflections will not be likely often to occur to your own mind. Only we are enjoined to "provoke one another to good works;" and this must be by suggesting the ideas that can most powerfully stimulate our conscience concerning them. There is a conceivable mode of applying all means and advantages that a thoughtful mind, in its most solemn moments, will feel very certain must be the one that our great Master will most approve, and on which he will one day the most emphatically pronounce those words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

. . . . Power, to its very last particle, is *duty*. To have full independence for deliberating and for entering on the best plan for future life, imposes the indispensable obligation of proceeding, without delay, to the balancing and the determination. Those who *cannot* change their situation and mode of employment are bound to consider them as the allotment of Providence, forming their peculiar sphere of duty, in which they are to exert themselves faithfully, and to exercise patience and self-denial amidst and against involuntary feelings of dislike to the nature of that allotted sphere. But when a man has the full power, and is in the favourable season of life, to make a choice, having also the essential means for prosecuting the object of his choice effectually, whatever it may be, the mere fact of having been previously in one particular way of life surely does not of itself fix on him a duty of continuing in it. This would suppose him absolved from the paramount duty of considering what is the best and greatest thing he might accomplish in life. Such a notion would be as gross a superstition as that of the Chinese. At the same time it should not be overlooked, that the knowledge and aptitude acquired by the practice of such previous employment are to be considered as of the nature of a talent, of no small value, and ought in all reason, to be the deciding weight if the balance were, *as to all other things*, in equilibrio,

between retaining the mode of employment and changing it. . . .

LXXXI. TO D. PARKEN, ESQ.

Bourton, February 7, 1812.

. . . . In spite of so much good advice as you have received you are still, I understand, at that foolish project of *Law*. Pray now, what *good* do you ever expect to do? On the grand estimate which a philosopher, philanthropist, and Christian ought to hold of the value of life, and its noblest employments, what pleasure will it be, toward the conclusion of it, to have to recollect all the toils, quibbles, and jabber of that inglorious profession? Not to mention that many able men do actually linger out half a life without obtaining, against the monopolists of the bar, even the opportunity of fairly figuring off in this jabber itself. As to getting money, making a fortune, and living in style,—surely a philosopher and Christian will and must hold such an object in contempt. It is quite time of day to make this contempt a real and practical principle of life. It is in perfect seriousness that I make such remarks. I never think without regret of your sacrificing your life and talents to that profession, which has so little connexion with the highest objects to which an able young man might devote his studies and life; and a profession too that is already, and will continue to be, excessively crowded and crammed with competitors. Surely it is worth one serious hour's consideration, whether, at the approach of death, and in the ultimate appearance before the Divine Judge, it would not be incomparably a more delightful recollection to have passed such a life and course of employment as that, for instance, of Fuller, or as that of Hall might be, if he were not so hopelessly idle in one respect, than the career of the most famous lawyer in the empire.

LXXXII. TO D. PARKEN, ESQ.

Bourton, April 30, 1812.

. . . . No language I can easily find would exaggerate my most real, sincere, and habitual horror of the implements of writing. I long hoped that this, even through *compelled* practice, might be partly removed; but now I foresee its prevalence to the end of life. I literally never write a letter, or a page or paragraph for printing, without an effort which I feel a pointed repugnance to make. And this circumstance I will not at all allow to be anything negative of the truth and cordiality of my friendship for a few individuals, including among the very foremost my old master, whom it would be a most cordial luxury to see and converse with, at this or any other hour, of any day of my life; but writing—writing—is one of the most grievous afflictions laid on this mortal state.

I am very glad of so good an account, so much better an account than some time since I could have hoped to hear, of your health; or rather, perhaps I ought to say, I *should* be very glad, if you were likely to make a good use of the inestimable possession. . . .

I believe the last thing of the nature of letter I wrote to you, and most appropriately denominated by you "trashy," was something about this topic. It made not the slightest impression, you are careful to say, in disfavour of your adopted profession. Faith! it little expected to do any such thing; nor would it have been in the least more successful if it had been written in the best mode of Johnson or Junius. What effect had Andrew Marvell's preaching, in his time, or would the preaching of any the like of him have now, on the congregation in St. Stephen's Chapel?

But to be sober on this point just one moment. It is a remarkable and incontestable fact, that, throughout the community, men of the legal profession have, as a class collectively, a much worse reputation for integrity than any other class of men not directly and formally addicted to iniquitous employments. There is a general and very decided feeling that their consciences are of a looser texture, that they easily make their own rules of right and wrong, and that it is peculiarly hazardous and unfortunate

to be thrown on their mercy, or to have any important points of interest depending on the discretion of their integrity. This is such an established impression in society as could not have been made without an adequate cause founded in experience. Again (as I probably noticed in my last scribblement), the public and political conduct of this class of men, as exhibited during this last melancholy stage of our history, furnishes a strong proof of the general baseness of their principles. It is nearly as a *body*—it is with a most extremely small number of exceptions—that they have supported all manner of corruptions—that they have fiercely and insolently opposed all manner of reforms—that they have gone with the ministry (such a ministry as this country has been under the last twenty years!) through thick and thin. All this, or the substance of all this, it would be mere quibbling and folly to attempt to deny. And all this being so, it is impossible for a person whose opinions shall be formed clear of the influence of any specific bias or interest, to help being convinced that there is, either in the essence of the profession, or in the established systematic spirit and mode to which the characters of its members have reduced its practice, something extremely adverse to pure and exalted integrity, and something peculiarly destructive to political independence. The *moral* of all this is very obvious; if a man enters the profession unaware, or unbelieving of its perverting influence, and without adopting at the commencement, and maintaining in perpetuity, an extra moral discipline and regimen for preserving the rectitude of his conscience, there is too strong a probability that he will lose that rectitude irretrievably, as he advances into the thickening influences and associations of the profession. The moral might indeed be applied at an earlier step of the concern, making it an important question, whether a man who is deeply solicitous about the moral and religious habits of his mind should enter the profession at all;—but I have supposed that question and affirmatively decided, and only suggested that the person who has chosen it had need be fully aware of the quality of the *auspices* under which he has chosen to place his character, and aware of what is indispensable to defeat their malignant influence. . . .

Your brother is just come to take leave. I most sincerely wish him health as the grand *sine quâ non*; and then, all success in his pursuits. Perhaps it is to be regretted that those pursuits have the preference to a certain other destination to which you allude, and to which I had some time since heard that he also had alluded. *My* regret on this point would be more decidedly expressed, but for the doubt, for which I fear there is too much ground, that the kind and degree of physical effort required in frequent public speaking would be injurious to him, if not dangerous. If his health shall become, which I most earnestly wish, fully established during the few next ensuing years, I hope the question of reverting to this theological destination will become a matter of conscience with him. But, indeed, he may very well *unite* the two engagements, maintaining a moderate exercise of both; for I am for preachers having, as many of them as possible, some other sources of emolument than the precarious one of their ministerial employment.

LXXXIII. TO THE REV. DR. RYLAND.

Bourton, May 20, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,—Dr. Cox's return, early in the morning, from a three or four days' visit here, gives me the opportunity of returning, without having recourse to any public conveyance, the books you were so kind as to lend me, so long since that I am quite ashamed to think of it. In any similar case in future, there really *must* be some legal bond, with a penalty for not returning the article lent within a specified short time. I am the less excusable in this delay, from having in my present possession (sent by Mr. Fuller, I believe,) the second volume, 4to. of the *Ramayuna*, and the first volume of *Confucius*, wanting only the first sheet, and including the whole of the biographical introduction, concerning the Chinese philosopher.

I am amazed beyond expression at the achievements of these missionaries; and I am *almost* glad, that so considerable a portion of their labours has been expended in translating for us the most renowned works of the east; for

thus we shall all, willing and unwilling, be brought to a right understanding of the vaunted wisdom of the orientals, which had left no need of such a thing as Christianity. As to the *absolute* value of what we thus obtain, one really begins to doubt, whether all that will ever be brought from the treasures of Asiatic learning, will be worth much more than the song of Chevy Chase.

With respect to the Chinese, a grand object is gained by our having now fairly got a way opened into that hitherto formidable and inaccessible language, for the introduction of the Christian truth by means of the translations that will now be easily made into it of the Bible, and other volumes of sound instruction.

I most sincerely wish you continued health, to sustain you in your unwearied and diversified labours in the cause of Christ; and am, with friendly remembrance to Mrs. Ryland, my dear sir,

Yours most respectfully and cordially,

J. FOSTER.

LXXXIV. TO D. PARKEN, ESQ.

Bourton, June 30, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,—It is a long enough time since I received your letter, but it can never be too long to remember favours and services, nor be impertinent to acknowledge them. I was not pleased with myself for having caused you so much trouble. . . . Accept my grateful acknowledgment that there is, at least, one benevolent individual in the profession of the Law.

. . . . I am setting off in a few hours for North Wales, where I am to climb Snowdon, Cader Idris, &c.; hunt the goats, roll stones down the declivities, and lose for a while the corrosion of the "*sæva indignatio*," against wicked men in power, and—shall I say?—of my remorse for having cruelly wronged, by unjust opinion and practical slander, a meek, simple-hearted, innocent class of saints, distinguished externally by wig and gown.

. . . . You are at Cobbett again. It is considerably

amusing to see what an air of *superfine morality* (as Sydney Smith would say) and sanctified alarm you London gentry assume whenever *he* comes in question; just as if *any* of us cared a straw for anything he says, *on the ground of his personal morality*, or for *any other reason* than so much truth and intellectual force as his writings display. But you talk of his "truths not less dangerous than his falsehoods;" which is just the kind of lingo with which people are endeavoured to be, and partly are perplexed, frightened, and gulled into an acquiescence with all the corruptions and mischiefs of the political state and course of things, while he is plainly and boldly enforcing a few great obvious principles, and illustrating them by a perpetual reference to facts. *He* was plainly stating and predicting, all along, how our management as to America *must* operate:—behold the consequence of despising all he said. *He* has all along urged the necessity of concession to the Catholics, and the abolition of flogging; he was "a pestilent sower of sedition," as you say, for his pains; but how odd it is that the whole State is coming round to him so fast! *He* predicted the whole process of the paper-money, and warned against augmenting the evil;—it was all seditious and *false*, for it has been substantially fulfilled. *He* has constantly represented that a Parliament constituted like ours will scorn all checks on the waste of public money;—seditious and false,—as witness the whole system of our outgoings, and, not last nor least, the vast and increasing account of sinecures and pensions.—And twenty more such things: all "dangerous falsehoods"—or, are these exposures the "dangerous, the equally dangerous *truths*?" that is, *the fact of these things being true* is quite a harmless matter, but for Cobbett to *tell* that they are true, is very "dangerous," "seditious," and "pestilent." But, I had all this over with W— not long since, and I have not the least liking to go over it again. Only it amazes one that Cobbett's dubious morality, and his being erroneous, perhaps, now and then in minor points (for in the great matters the business is too bulky and palpable for much deception or falsehood) should really have the effect to turn so much urgent and awful truth into such comfortable falsehood that the nation may sleep quite at its ease! . . .

LXXXV. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Bourton, September 1, 1812.

. . . . Your life and adventures resound through the "United Kingdom," and really have been so moving and multifarious, that I should think you must have nearly the same crowded confusion of review as our old acquaintance who is probably at this very time amusing himself among the curiosities of Moscow,—getting the great bell slung, perhaps, or some such thing. I greatly exult in the *practical* part of the business you are prosecuting in so many directions,—in the *main effect* of journeys, meetings, spoutings, and roarings; but, to be sure, the *manner* of it is infinitely abominable. In all time there surely never was a concern that brought out such a quantity of bad rhetoric—inflated, common-place, egotistical ostentation, nauseous cajolery, and reciprocated flattery, and mock-heroic pomp of triumph, for having—crushed a spider, or marched in the desperate spirit of martyrdom through a bed of nettles. This last characteristic especially, glares out to a degree intensely ridiculous. To hear some of the speech-makers, one would really suppose (but for the bombastic cast of the language) that one was hearing Wickliffe or Luther, exulting in having thus far braved the terrors of the Roman bulls and the Inquisition. Nothing of these charges, or but a trifle, attaches to you personally; and you must very often have suffered a provoking temptation to rebuke the rant of your occasional coadjutors, not to say any of your more permanent ones. . . .

LXXXVI. TO HIS PARENTS.

Bourton, November 14, 1812.

. . . . The burning of the printing-office at Serampore has produced a great sensation in the religious public, and a multitude of very liberal contributions have been made to repair the disaster. This place is seldom behind in charitable exertions. Last Sunday Mr. Coles preached one sermon and I another with some relation to this event; a subscription and collection have been made, and the result is, I

believe, between eighty and ninety pounds contributed in this and two neighbouring villages, towards restoring the full means and powers of that grand oriental magazine for the warfare against the pagan gods and all their abominations. My text was, Jer. xliii. 12, "I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods." *

* The following outline of his discourse is taken from Mr. Foster's own notes:—

"This passage for a text may seem a great way off our subject, *that* relating to a fire in a very different kind of place. We may, nevertheless, venture to think that it is *not* quite so far from the subject. For when an agent has done signal mischief, it is not unnatural nor uncommon to inquire whether it can be made to render any kind of *compensation*, by doing a thing that shall have an opposite effect. Well! recollect our text. Fire has done the injury; can there be a more glorious compensation? Fire has done this one thing, but it will do another! The temples of India will burn one of these days. Literally so; and why? because images of idolatrous superstition and of vice are inseparable from the very walls. And this institution which has suffered by fire, will be the cause of carrying fire to those temples. The Serampore establishment is a kind of burning mountain that has risen on the idolatrous continent, and it will throw out fire inextinguishably in all directions.

"To return to the expression of our text, 'the gods.' God has been reduced by mortals to talk of 'the gods;' a striking and awful consideration. These 'gods,' how came they to be among men? It was because men would not be content to be without them. The Evil Spirit came, and, as it were, made an offer of them; it was accepted eagerly and without limit. He was, as it were, commissioned to bring as many devils as he pleased to be adored on earth. Even this was not enough; men set about making 'gods' themselves with all diligence. They could not see a handsome tree, or block of marble, but straightway they thought of 'gods.' And nothing could be too mean for the purpose.

"'The houses of the gods.' Men set about erecting them houses with all possible zeal; infinitely profuse of labour, ingenuity, and art. No inhabitants of the earth are so magnificently accommodated with abodes as the 'gods.' One of these houses often costs as much as to build a city almost. If all the people on the earth were in want of houses, the labour requisite for building good habitations for them all, would be a trifle compared with that which has been expended on the houses of the gods. In desolated, ruined countries and cities, the *remains* of *their* houses have lasted the longest,—*e. g.* Egypt. But though there are many of them in ruins, there are a vast multitude in full preservation and use. What has been done and is doing in those 'houses of the gods,' you have heard this morning. (Mexico.) This one observation will apply generally; viz. that the *worst* of what any people did, was done in service to their gods, and in their houses. And this is the state to which the human mind is sunk! Retaining the idea of Divine Powers, it has been *such* an idea! What awful justice in the Almighty!

It is exceedingly gratifying, while wars and devastations and all manner of iniquities are deluging the earth, to observe what a most extraordinary spirit has been awakened

"Now, what state of mind would it imply, not to be grieved and indignant at this dreadful state of things! What would *we* do that these gods and their houses should perish from the earth! What do you think you would be willing to do, if you were necessitated to have *your* houses close to some of their houses, to hear and see, and imagine the rest! What, then, is it merely the inconvenience that grieves! But consider these things do not cease to be, because you do not see and hear them. Oh, how many times ten thousand of these houses there are! There is one kingdom (Nepaul), not very far from where our missionaries are, where an English traveller says, the houses of the gods appear almost as many as those of men. The question returns, What shall we, or can we, do! Perhaps we would wish that the true God would send down immediate fire from heaven and consume them. We might be very glad, certainly, if it were so. But even then but little of the work would be done, if the ignorance and idolatrous spirit of the people remained. And again, if the work were done so, our great Master would not be giving *us* a hand in it. Surely we shall not say, Well, I do not wish to have any hand, so the thing be done. How far would this principle lead us! We should be at last little more than animals, existing to consume the produce of the earth. What is it that makes men truly great on earth and in heaven! 'They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.' (Dan. xii. 3). Think of all noble reformers and illuminators of the world (Luther, &c.); the many eminent missionaries in past times; those now in the East. Why, they might have lived a harmless, indolent life, and said, God will do it all, if he is so pleased; we want no hand in the matter. And what would they have been *then*, compared with what they now are! But, in eternity! God has put honour on his servants, in appointing them a large portion of service, and calling them 'workers together with him.' Now, we *can* help a little in a great plan, which will be sure at length to carry the fire of God into those detested 'houses.' But think what would become of this plan, humanly speaking, if nobody would aid it to go on. But, then, what shall be thought of those persons (perhaps, too, professing religion) who well can and will not! Do they wish it should not go on! Or are they thinking thus, 'Oh, there is much zeal in the Christian public, the plan *will* be carried on, whether *I* help or not!' What consolation at the last day! 'Well, I saved my money.'

"In the progress of such a plan, it might be expected there would be checks and disasters. A most signal one in the present instance. In some respects mysterious, considering that there never was a better work doing since Abel's time,—that the labourers are few,—that the chief of them are advancing toward the decline of life,—that the property destroyed was created, so to express it, by Christian charity, and employed for this sole purpose,—and especially that the bible may come later by many months—in some case, some years—into some of the pagan regions and languages.

"But then there are opposite points of view in which we can see how the event may be an advantage.

for the promotion of knowledge and religion. It is peculiarly a happy sign for our nation, amidst all its weight of demerits and calamities.

. . . . Of late I have had to preach every Sunday, and generally twice. It has not, as yet, brought back the old debility; whether the prolonged continuance of it would do so, I do not know. Nor am I at all likely or inclined to engage any where as a stated, constant preacher to a congregation. Certainly the pecuniary resource that would arise from such an engagement would be a serviceable thing; but I shall be able to live without that resource, and there is a great deal more freedom attending the way of preaching I am now in. I can now preach or refuse to preach, according to my own convenience, and am conferring obligations without incurring any; while the usefulness may be nearly as great, I should hope, as if I preached in a

"1. It will increase the fame of the Institution, and excite more attention to it.

"2. It may impress the very heathens with a kind of belief that the thing is to go on.

"3. The extraordinary aid to recover the effects of such a calamity, will animate the persons immediately concerned.

"4. It will be a pleasing assurance that there is really such a spirit rising in the country as will be equal to any great and extraordinary occasion.

"But you see, all this takes for granted, that there will actually be the most zealous and generous efforts on this occasion. Such zeal may be stimulated by the consideration of the feelings and wishes with which several kinds of men would have beheld that fire—priests of the false gods—Mahometans—infidels—persons who declaim against enthusiasm, and will not believe that the proper season is come—persons who go for mere worldly gain to that country, and care nothing about the spiritual state of the people, and pronounce such care to be folly. Now, shall we gratify these? While we regret the loss by the devouring element, let us consider it as somewhat of the nature of a burnt-sacrifice, and reflect what a measure of property the Jews were required to lose by fire in their religion. Let us consider how zealous men are to recover other losses by fire—ships—fortifications—towns (Moscow). But! Drury Lane and Covent Garden!

"Just once more. A man's spending of property for religion now, will be a great saving of it to his posterity. And do not the accumulators of riches look forward to posterity? Yes, they do; in planting oaks; in their care to have their houses so built, that they will far outlast their own lives.

"All exterior property is doomed to be consumed at the last day; it is desirable that as much of it as possible should have been as long as possible put in such employments as will produce results that will not suffer by the *last fire*."

more stated way. The preparation for preaching in this way, too, takes less time from my other intellectual business than if I were a constant preacher in one place. It has also the advantage (so long as I am in this neighbourhood) of taking me out into the air sometimes, by necessity, and so counteracts the bad effect of keeping constantly within the house, which I do very much.

LXXXVII. TO HIS PARENTS.

Bourton, February, 1813.

. . . . It is still gratifying to advert to the *good* designs that are going on, though their magnitude and the rate of their progress be so far behind the designs of *evil*. This disparity, however, we trust, will lessen, and is lessening every day. The great loss at Serampore is now, it seems, more than made up by the public liberality; so that that eastern warfare against Satan will have suffered but a very slight suspension, to be renewed with still greater zeal and means of offence. Every successive year's accounts from the missionaries there, is still more gratifying than the former. The last much surpasses any of the preceding. There never was on earth a set of men more faithful to a great object, nor, as to the principals of them, at least, more excellently qualified for it. To me it is constantly a cause of wonder by what art, by what almost preternatural faculty, it is possible for human beings to accomplish so much as they are incessantly doing. It is the utmost possible exertion of mortal industry, but doubtless it is also a very extraordinary measure of divine assistance. The doctrine of divine assistance, the gracious agency of the Holy Spirit, is infinitely consolatory to me—a doctrine without which I should sink into despondency and despair. What a long course of experience you have had of its truth, and its value, and how emphatic a testimony you could, at each recollection of past life, bear to the preciousness of this part of the gospel. It stands next to the doctrine of atonement by the sacrifice of Christ, in its power of animating the soul, and saving it from the overwhelming force of a world of evil. . . .

LXXXVIII. TO HIS MOTHER.

Bourton, September, 1814.

DEAR AND HONOURED MOTHER,—I have little that is new to mention this time. Since I wrote last, however, I have been at Worcester, which is a considerable number of hours' ride from hence. I was applied to, to preach a Sunday for the Baptist minister there, who is in a dangerous state of health. . . . There are a number of the faithful, one here and one there, just on the point of quitting the earth; and what a change it will be to quit such a scene to enter immediately into the heavenly paradise. One is continually hearing of some one or other who has finished the mortal course, and of others who are evidently nearly on the point of doing it, in the devout and grateful confidence of entering the eternal kingdom. *They* can have little to make them wish to stay on earth. But one is still willing to hope—indeed cannot help rather confidently hoping—that before all the present inhabitants of the earth shall be called to remove from it, there will be such a transformation of its moral condition, that an aged Christian will have really somewhat *less* cause to be earnest for his departure than in such a time and state of things as the present. A good man, though glad to go to heaven, will nevertheless have somewhat less loathing of the earth that he is going to escape from, when he leaves it abounding in the blessed effects of Christianity; when the people of his family, of his neighbourhood, and of his nation, are become, or are rapidly becoming, the genuine, zealous, and holy disciples and servants of Christ.

Kidderminster, where Baxter preached with such marvellous success, being at no great distance from Worcester, I took a ride thither with one or two friends, and walked a long time in and about the church in which he preached, and in which the people, it is said, are now taught no doctrine similar to his. His pulpit remained till within a few years back, when it was removed as an old-fashioned thing. We went to see it where it is carefully preserved, in the vestry of a *Socinian* meeting-house. An ancient-looking inscription carved on it shows it to be nearly two hundred years old, being placed in the church many years before

Baxter preached there. It is small, of oak, quite sound and firm, and is decorated with old carving, painting, and gilding, in a manner which must have been strangely gaudy ; inso-much that, unless this was common in those days, one could almost fancy Baxter must have been displeased with so showy an object every time he looked at it. It was striking to stand in this pulpit, and reflect what a saintly and apostolic man had often occupied it ; what an eloquence of piety had been, with almost miraculous efficacy, poured from it ; and what the state of that preacher may be now ! It was impossible not to feel some emotions of sorrow at having been so little like him, and of desire to be more enabled and animated to follow him as he followed Christ.

With very great interest, of a widely different kind, we viewed at a place not far distant, some stupendous iron-works, where we saw many operations of prodigious power, by means of engines ; and, among other curious sights, gazed at a kind of *cascade* of iron, violently streaming down in a state apparently as fluid as water. The brilliance and the formidableness of this object were most striking. There were several chimneys nearly, we were told, *three hundred feet* high ; and there was a great iron wheel, which we were assured, on what appeared very good authority, is computed to revolve much more than three hundred miles in an hour. I am glad to have seen these various objects, as I am to have beheld any thing curious and wonderful, on account of the new ideas they fix in the mind. By a proper application these become of great value to a man whose business is to be mental.

LXXXIX. TO HIS MOTHER.

Bourton, October, 1814.

MY DEAR AND HONOURED MOTHER, The poor people in *agricultural* parts of the land are generally extremely ignorant, and dull of apprehension. They are considerably more so than the people of manufacturing districts. Field occupations, with their attendant and consequent habits, notoriously tend to stupify the mental facul-

ties. So that one sometimes almost despairs of making such things as *ideas* palpable to their apprehension. One has often the mortification of perceiving that the plainest, most pointed, and repeated representations of pure truth and invisible things, fail to reach, so to speak, the vital region of the mind. It is to many, who do hear a sound of speaking, just the same, as to the mind, as if nothing at all were said. The thoughts are not taken hold of; they do not distinctly make themselves present one moment to the understandings or imaginations of those to whom they are directed.

From such an experience of what men are, one is receiving continual corroboration of the conviction that nothing less than a divine power can effectually arrest and awaken men's minds; and therefore a strong incitement to invoke the intervention of that irresistible power. But at the same time, that power itself seems to prefer for the subjects of its operations the class of minds that are previously taught and influenced by education, and habitual attention to knowledge. This seems a general rule, though here and there the sovereignty of the power and the independence of its operations are evinced, illustrated, and honoured, by the conversion of some of the most desperately uncultivated and untoward of the human race.

It is exceedingly gratifying to consider, how much more generally the rudiments of religious and other knowledge will be possessed by the next generation than they are by the present; in consequence of the extension of the means of education, and the rapid and vast diffusion of the Bible; so that preachers twenty years hence will have a more pleasing office than they have had hitherto. Already some effect begins to be apparent. And the mere circumstance that the hearers of the Christian ministrations are increasing prodigiously every year, in numbers, is a happy and a hopeful sign of the times. Aged Christians may justly be grateful for it, as one of the consolations granted to the evening of their laborious day of life, that the Almighty gives indications that he is going to accomplish the prophetic assurances of a grand improvement of the world, and that the young pious friends they are going to leave behind, will, if they live to old age, have seen far happier times

than their predecessors who are now on the verge of the world.

There is nothing particularly new in this neighbourhood, except the opening last week of a new Methodist chapel in a small town a few miles off, where I have often been to preach. I am very glad of it, however I may differ from their opinions; for their active and indefatigable zeal is sure to do good,—incomparably more good, I trust, than harm. We are all in health. I prayed earnestly this morning, and have often done so; that “the *goodness* of God may lead us to repentance;” that being attracted to him in devout affection by his mercies, we may be saved from the necessity of being disciplined to obedience and dependence by judgments of the severe order.

I am always sorry to think of you at the return of winter, which is now once more so fast approaching. *One* of the venerable persons to whom, and for whom, I have so often before expressed this feeling, is now beyond the reach of winters, and all the worse evils of this world. How often he mistakenly expected he should never suffer another winter; but there was an appointed time to realize his expectations; and that time is come, and is past! How full of mystery, and wonder, and solemnity, is the thought of where he may be now, and what his employments, and how divine the rapture of feeling with infinite certainty that he has begun a never-ending life of progressive joy and glory! The consideration of this will be an animated consolation to you in the sojourn which you are left behind to finish; and I hope it will be an incitement to each of his relatives to wish and pray ardently, “Let me die the death of the righteous.”

XC. TO HIS MOTHER.

Bourton, December, 1814.

DEAR AND HONOURED MOTHER,—It is such a gloom of winter that I can but just see to write, though it is about mid-day. We have had something very like a storm for a whole week past, in a constant series of violent winds and rain. It has occurred to me how dreary it must have been

on your bleak hills, if there has been a similar season there. Having lately read a good deal of the accounts of voyagers, I am forcibly reminded what formidable scenes a multitude of human beings are now exposed in at sea. I expect to hear many accounts of perils and disasters on that element; for I have no remembrance of so long a continuance of tempestuous winds. How many times and occasions there are which, if they make one think of the world at large, make one think of it as a vast scene of calamity. And how strange and mournful it is that men should, nevertheless, be so generally careless of availing themselves of the Almighty Refuge. I have just been inspecting a long and most interesting and striking account of the bold and often perilous enterprises of a foreign traveller, during several years, in which he traversed many thousands of miles, often in wild and formidable regions, and I do not recollect meeting with even one single reference to a Protecting Providence. He seems well disposed to take to himself all the praise of his safety and success. This sort of impiety I find very prevalent among this class of adventurers, with whose narratives I have been almost daily conversant for a good part of this last year, my literary task-business having been very much in that department. It is a kind of reading, besides, which I have had a great liking for, from my childhood. You can recollect with what interest and eagerness, when I was a boy, I read every thing I could obtain relating to the strange objects and adventures in distant regions, and how confidently and almost enthusiastically I anticipated and projected that I should myself become a travelling adventurer, and see almost all the wonderful places and spectacles of which I read.*

* "Some of us can recollect it among the vain feelings of earlier life, that we regretted the disproportion between the dimensions of the globe and the locomotive powers of man, and should have been glad for the one to have been greater or the other less. Or it would have partly contented us, as to our own gratification (and we own we were not much caring for that of persons in distant nations), if ten or twenty of the most wonderful objects and scenes in the whole world had been placed in such contiguity as to be comprehended in one country, and in Europe, where a moderate share of travelling might have brought us in sight of all that most deserved admiration on earth. But as these objects are placed at such distances

A different lot was intended for me by the Sovereign Disposer; but the same *taste* will no doubt remain as long as I live, its mode of gratification being nearly confined to

that a hundred thousand miles of travelling, and the average length of human life, would hardly suffice to carry a man to all the principal of them, we felt great mortification, while burning with a most eager passion for the sight of the wonders we read of, to think of the miserable slowness of the modes of human motion, as set against the immense spaces which must be traversed to gratify the ambition of curiosity. When, in addition to this, we found ourselves denied the means and facilities for visiting even many remarkable scenes much nearer home than those which make the most conspicuous figure in a description of the globe, means which would have enabled the ordinary powers of motion to reach these nearer objects of curiosity in a comparatively short time, we did sometimes feel the wonderful accounts of travellers and naturalists operate as a bitter satire on our lot as belonging to such a slow moving genus of animals, as being placed so far from the most interesting spots on the earth, and as having at command so few of the compensations derivable from viewing more accessible, though less magnificent, wonders. It was mortifying, after reading of Niagara, to find nothing in the compass of our walks more striking than the weir of the mill-pond; to turn our eyes from the page which described an eruption of Etna, to see the smoke of the brick-kiln of forge; to be reminded of the pyramids by the sight of a steeple, or to have our reverie about Thebes or Palmyra interrupted by coming in view of a ruined manor-house. And even when, being in a much less romantic and classical mood, we carried the excursions of fancy no farther than Derbyshire, Cumberland, Killarney, or the Highlands, the indulgence became a very equivocal gratification, while we looked over the dull level or the insignificant hillocks around us, and considered how many things concurred to forbid our going even a hundred leagues to indulge our taste for the beautiful and the sublime.

"With no very good grace, perhaps, we submitted to our destiny, which every interesting book of travels we successively read, tempted us to deem an unfortunate one, but which we endeavoured to alleviate by making to ourselves a positive assurance, that at some period of life we absolutely would and must repay ourselves, by gazing on Alps, or cataracts, or the ruins of ancient grandeur. It was not so obvious how this could be, but an acknowledged certainty that it was *not to be*, would really have been a grievous conviction.

"Though still subject to a revival of all our ancient enthusiasm when we look into some parts of the books of Bruce or Denon, and though it is somewhat hazardous to our peace of mind to read about Rome, Herculaneum, Vesuvius, and Antiparos, yet time, sober reflection, and disappointment, not to add the infirmities of age, have done a good deal toward reconciling us to our excursions of half a mile, to our garret, and to our arm-chair, sitting in which garret and chair we often depute our imagination to accompany, instead of our bodily form and substance, the adventurers who traverse large tracts of sea and land. When these heroes are brought into desperate perils, we look complacently round on the dingy walls of our

the reading or hearing of *other* men's adventures and wonderful sights. And this kind of reading, while it is very entertaining, and on that account would be very tempting even if it were of no use, is capable, at the same time, of supplying the most valuable assistance to thought, and the most striking and useful illustrations to the religious and moral teacher, whether in preaching or in writing. I hardly ever preach without availing myself of something I have met with in books of travels; and remarkable facts, pertinently introduced, will sometimes produce a striking effect: they awaken attention, which is itself no small matter.

While thus reading travels into remote and wonderful scenes, I am often struck with the thought, what a far more signal and important journey than all this awaits myself, and how much more marvellous the regions that will ere long be

garret, and kindly grasp the arm of the chair, feeling ourselves very glad that our bodily substance is where we find it to be; but no sooner do we see them dexterously eluding or bravely surmounting the danger, than we begin to think that we were qualified to share the exploit, and deserving to share the triumph. When we beheld Park in the very romantic predicament of finding the gates of the town shut against him, while he heard a lion roar, and perceived its very near approach by the rustling of the bushes, there is no doubt that we blessed ourselves in the security of our situation; but when this man of resources mounted a tree, and defied the enemy, we thought that we also could have climbed a tree with the adroitness of apes, and there laughed at the formidable king of beasts. Some of our readers may be spiteful enough to say, that a cluster of reviewers, with their spectacles on, up in a tree, would have been a goodly sight, and to wish we might have been reduced to hold our sessions no where else to the end of time. They must however pardon our opinion, that no tree was ever so richly loaded as the one in question would be:—but we are talking about the adventures of travellers, and the employments of our garret. Till that impatience to see wonderful things, which we have described as the grand passion of our youth, shall totally subside in old age, we shall hold it a principle of prudence to distribute books of travels into two classes, the animated and wonderful, and the sober and common. The former class we may hope to read in safety and advantage in our dull and languid seasons, since they will be at such times sufficient to enliven our spirits, without exciting us to deplore the want of wings or balloons, which we should be likely to do if we were to take up such books at an hour when our minds are at all infected with ardour and enthusiasm. This latter is the proper season for perusing slow-paced narratives and tame descriptions, which may contribute to damp the distempered passion, that is so fierce for distant climates. We are willing to acknowledge our obligations for a degree of benefit of this kind, derived from the work before us.—*ECLECTIC REVIEW, July, 1809 (Cordiner's Ceylon).*

opened to my view ; and therefore, so far as the passion for wonders is concerned, I may be content to wait till called to go on a mysterious expedition to some other world. Meanwhile, I earnestly hope and pray that the intervening space of time may be very much and effectually employed in a solemn and judicious preparation for that greatest of enterprises. It is most striking to reflect how many of our friends, and the persons we knew, and habitually saw around us, have already gone. They do not come to tell us where they have been, and what they have beheld. Well, —we shall not need their information ; we shall go ourselves into the unknown scene. And I humbly trust in the divine mercy we shall be met and welcomed, at the moment of our quitting this world, by a friendly and powerful Guide, into whose hands we may gladly commit our departing spirits.

XCI. TO MRS. BUNK.

Bourton, January 28.

MY DEAR MADAM, . . . My visit was extremely gratifying, even in spite of that tedious though trivial task which occupied so much of the earlier part of the time. I will take care next time (and might have taken care then, by a little previous management and industry) to be exempted from any such interference with social satisfactions—perhaps I should say *duties*, for I was ashamed not to call on my good friends of the humbler order. As a matter of entertainment I was very sorry not to be able to accompany the ladies on another excursion to see those most noble old friends of ours, the *oaks* at Longleat.

On the Sunday morning, I heard one of the very wildest of the Wesleyan Methodists—a man with the northern provincial brogue and grammar fresh upon him, and in point of intellectual discipline a perfect wild ass's colt. By way of contrast I went directly to the Abbey Church, and heard a consequential looking ecclesiastic read a sermon sensible in its way, and partly directed against the assumption by one class of preachers of the distinctive denomination—Evan-

gelical. At Argyle Chapel, in the evening, I heard a very highly sensible sermon from Mr. East.

The effects of the season were not so far on their progress about Bristol as in your neighbourhood. But I had no time to take much notice of the last lingering beauty, or for any excursions for the mere purpose of looking about—except once so far beyond Bristol as St. Vincent's rocks, which in an excessively cold and wet day I contrasted with the magnificence of some of the scenes of North Wales. But even had there been higher rocks, and finer days, there was a circumstance capable of rendering them for a while matters of inferior interest. That circumstance was no other than my falling once more, after many years' interval, into the company of Coleridge, who was at the time lecturing and talking in Bristol.

I could not conveniently hear more than one of his lectures (on Shakespeare), but it was a still higher luxury to hear him talk as much as would have been two or three lectures. I use the word *luxury*, however, not without some very considerable qualification of its usual meaning, since it may not seem exactly descriptive of a thing involving much severe labour,—and this one is forced often to undergo in the endeavour to understand him, his thinking is of so surpassingly original and abstracted a kind. This is the case often even in his recitals of facts, as that recital is continually mixed with some subtle speculation. It was perfectly wonderful, in looking back on a few hours of his conversation, to think what a quantity of perfectly original speculation he had uttered, in language incomparably rich in ornament and new combinations. In point of theological opinion, he is become, indeed has now a number of years been, it is said, highly orthodox. He wages victorious war with the Socinians, if they are not, which I believe they now generally are, very careful to keep the peace in his company. His mind contains an astonishing mass of all sorts of knowledge, while in his power and manner of putting it to use, he displays more of what we mean by the term genius than any mortal I ever saw or ever expect to see. He is still living in a wandering, precarious, and comfortless way, perpetually forming projects which he has not the steady resolution to prosecute long enough to accomplish. His appearance

indicates much too evidently, that there is too much truth in the imputation of intemperance. It is very likely he beguiles his judgment and conscience by the notion of an exciting effect to be produced on his faculties by strong fluids. I have not heard that he ever goes the length of disabling himself for the clearest mental operation, but certainly he indulges to a degree that, if not forborne, will gradually injure his faculties and health. It is probable he is haunted by an incurable restlessness, a constant, permanent sense of infelicity. This has been augmented, doubtless, by the total deficiency of domestic satisfactions.

XIII. TO HIS MOTHER.

Bourton, April, 1815.

DEAR AND HONOURED MOTHER, . . . My good wife has taken great pains with John, and he can now read, readily enough, in any of the easier sort of books. Her health has somewhat suffered by the long harassing anxiety about the youngest child during the precarious state of his health and life. As the fine season is coming on, I hope she will recover whatever she has lost. What an incalculable measure of care it is that a mother has in rearing a few of these human creatures;—and then to think with what perfect indifference the monarchs of Europe are at this very hour, devoting, in all probability, several hundreds of thousands of such creatures, reared quite to maturity, to die in battles and hospitals within the next three or four months!

I may presume that the season has been with you, as here, unusually mild, and so far indulgent to the infirmities of old age. There is here scarcely any remembrance of a spring so advanced in point of vegetation at the end of April. The apple-trees are opening their blossoms, and all is beautiful around. This is not, however, a favourable situation for seeing Nature to advantage; our views are so confined, and so destitute of any thing striking and romantic in form. I often regret, especially when reading books of travels with perhaps fine engravings of sublime or beautiful scenes, that it should have been my lot to spend so

considerable a part of my life in a place so completely removed from the magnificence of Nature,—from the mountains, the rocks, the torrents, the cataracts, or the sea-shores, the view of which I know, by transient experience, to be so animating and enchanting to the imagination. This has been not only so much lost to me in point of pleasure,—that is even a secondary consideration; what I still more regret is, the loss of what such scenes, often or habitually beheld, would have added to the treasury of ideas in my mind; ideas of great value for illustrating and animating the course of thought and discourse, in all the modes of instruction,—by writing, preaching, social talking, and even social prayer. If any considerable portion of life yet remain to me, I hope that Providence will so favour me with respect to place of residence, that I shall yet obtain a good share of this advantage, so important as I know it to be for the enrichment of imagination. I have had one valuable compensation for this deprivation, in the opportunity of seeing some of the most sumptuous and splendid books of voyages and travels, with engravings of many of the most remarkable objects and scenes in the world. . . . This has really been a valuable advantage of my connexion with booksellers and reviewing. . . .

It often occurs to me, when thinking of, and regretting not being permitted to see, the striking scenes of this globe, how soon I shall be summoned to see things inexpressibly more striking and awful, in the unknown world to which departing spirits will take their flight. May what remains of life be above all things devoted to the great concern of being prepared for that inevitable and marvellous flight and vision. Which of us is to go first, remains yet to be seen. The one of our number that had the longest dwelt on this earth has taken the lead, and has now beheld what is infinitely beyond all mortal conception.

I can have no doubt that both you and my old friend S. T., amidst the daily weight of infirmity, find the promise fulfilled, of strength equal to the day, and so you know it will be to the very last hour. "He is faithful that has promised." He is sure to take especial care of those who are comparatively soon to be with him in heaven.

XCIII. TO MISS B——.

Bourton, August 22, 1815.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—We have been returned hither this nine or ten days, during which I have been repeatedly reminded by Maria, in a tone become quite reproachful at last, of the kindness which requested to hear soon after our return, and, as in all other cases, I have still answered—To-morrow. Most things she can compel me to do, within some tolerable bounds of time; but to *write*, there I am beyond her power—that is the thing in which Fate alone can rule me.

We extended our term of dissipation a full week beyond what I reckoned on as the very utmost limit, when we were at F. So long as Hall was to be heard, and Mr. J. S. was expected to be seen, there was something very plausible to be pleaded; but when both these gratifications were past, it was quite time for sober thoughts, and a return to the garret; but the event proved that there was nearly another week to be expended. On one of the days I took a round of about thirty miles on horseback, in company with a very clever and excellent young man, a barrister that is going to be. We went to Brockley Combe, Dundry, &c. Another of the days we contrived to get into the house of Mr. Hart Davis, the member for Bristol, to see several celebrated pictures. Though totally ignorant of painting, as an art, it was impossible not to be exceedingly delighted with several grand landscapes of Claude Lorraine, and a countenance by Leonardo da Vinci, intended for the Messiah previously to his incarnation—a countenance I should really think never yet equalled, nor hereafter to be equalled, in painting or in reality. On quitting these rooms of enchantment, I could not help admitting the hint, that, in spite of all that philosophers have said, wealth *has* some advantages. Four or five of the pictures taken together, are accounted worth, I believe, £20,000. Though not of so magnificent an order, we saw a number of very fine performances of the great foreign painters, at a house not a mile from Dr. C.'s. A number of the landscapes were of extreme beauty, by Vernet, Ruysdael, &c., &c. I cannot exactly judge whether I should, on

the whole, like a room so illuminated for a habitual place of reading, musing, or, if I may use the word, *study*; but I think I should like it, for that it would do more good in the way of brightening and enriching imagination than it would do harm in the way of diverting attention. A considerable portion of another day I spent in examining the splendid part of the Bristol city library, where there are probably ten thousand volumes; but my attention was nearly confined to about a dozen—the costly books of engravings relating to Athens, Palmyra, Rome, &c., &c. Another portion of the same day, and some hours of another day, were spent in Mr. Cottle's study, under benefit of special privilege to read a variety of MS. letters of Southey, Coleridge, &c. I received but a melancholy account of this last sublime and unhappy genius, who continues the slave and victim, I now fear hopelessly, of that wretched habit which has already, in a measure, obscured and humiliated the most extraordinary faculties I have ever yet seen resident in a form of flesh and blood. His own reproaches, I understand, are more bitter than any that he can hear from a fellow mortal; but still unavailing. Hughes tells me, in mingled language of admiration and compassion, that he made a week or two since in Wiltshire, at a Bible Society meeting where Hughes was, a speech of profound intelligence; only, as was to be expected, too abstract for a popular occasion.

Hall was the grand attraction in Bristol. We heard him as often as six times, besides a speech he made at the public meeting respecting the National Education Society, at which Mackintosh was expected, but was unable to attend. There were fully four hours of close, dense speech-making. A great deal of good sense was uttered, and with less cajolery and impertinence than one often hears on such occasions. Hall's acute and witty speech could not, unfortunately, be heard by one half the assembly. I was sorry Mr. S. could not have been apprised of this meeting; but he lost still more in not being at Broadmead on the evening of the same day (Tuesday), where Hall made, I should think it hardly extravagant to suppose, the noblest sermon ever heard within those walls, or even within that city; the text—"Hast thou made all men in

vain?" It combined all the elements of supremacy in religious eloquence. It was explanatory, argumentative, ingenious, comprehensive, and sublime; it was emphatically solemn and applicatory to conscience, with a pathetic earnestness and emotion toward the latter end, which was almost irresistible. He was himself, in one part of the concluding division, very deeply moved; and there is something strangely striking in the unaffected and insuppressible emotion of a strong, firm, masculine, and intrepid person like him, with a temperament partaking much of that kind of hardness which does not feel slight impressions or gentle interests. We had him at Dr. C.'s one night, and a good part of next day, and I was in his company several times in Bristol. Company, however, he says, and I believe truly, he likes less and less each successive year. With very great devotion, I apprehend there is almost a habitual shade of gloom over his mind; besides, that he endures so much corporal suffering, and is certain to do so as long as he lives. . . . You may not have seen his book, "Terms of Communion;" it is very able, and one should think conclusive and final; but one is not much pleased to see such a mind so long occupied on a subject giving so little scope or occasion for the exercise of his more eloquent thinking

XCIV. TO HIS MOTHER.

Bourton, November, 1815.

DEAR AND HONOURED MOTHER,—Since I wrote last I have been almost as invariably shut up in the house as if I had been a prisoner. I have been reading in a cursory sort of way, a variety of things, in English, Latin, and French; among other things a considerable portion of Virgil, whom I am ashamed to have never fairly read through since I was at Mr. Fawcett's school. I do not know that I should now have particularly thought of reading him but for the accident of having obtained possession of a particularly fine copy of him, accompanied by an ample commentary, by a most learned German, who em-

ployed a great part of twenty years of his life in illustrating this poet.

Some parts of what I have read have powerfully recalled the circumstances and feelings of a period so long since elapsed as the time of my residence at *Brearley Hall*. That period appears long since, even during these recollections. How striking it is to consider, that I am now materially more than twenty years nearer to an entrance into another world than then! If I had then been sure of living till now, it would have appeared a very wide space for a certainty of future life;—and what great things (in a comparative sense) I should have confidently hoped to accomplish within it. But, indeed, the uncertainty of that prolongation of life—the improbability of life being protracted more than four-and-twenty years beyond the moment of my bidding adieu to *Brearley Hall*, ought to have made me but the more earnest and diligent to turn every week and day to the best account. I have now to review that long period as irrevocably past. And I review it with great regret. I have not, I hope, altogether lived in vain; but my attainments for myself, my usefulness to others, my service to God,—have been miserably small, in comparison of what they might with such means, and in such a space have been. I have many gloomy musings on the subject, in which I can easily represent to myself this and the other good thing which has been possible, but has not been accomplished, during that long space of health and privileges—the best part of life, beyond comparison. It has been a space of time, in all probability, worth much more in point of capability than all the rest of my life; that is, all that preceded the time I left *Brearley*, taken together with all that may yet remain,—even should I live to attain your present age, which is altogether unlikely.

Nevertheless, so perverse and stupid is this human nature, that even these melancholy reflections, combined with all the solemnity of my anticipations, do not always suffice to rouse me to that earnestness and practical exertion which I feel to be, if possible, still more urgently my duty every day that now comes to me;—every day which is lessening the perhaps brief remainder.—Upon the whole, however, I hope I do feel an increasing force of conscience

and religion, and therefore an increasing solicitude that whatever remains of my time on earth may be so employed and improved, that I may not, at the end, have the same feelings concerning *it*, that I now have concerning the last twenty-five years.

It is one important advantage gained by the past time to be most powerfully and habitually convinced that Divine aid is indispensable, in a very large measure, to our making the best and noblest improvements of life. That aid I shall supplicate every day that I have to spend on earth.

My business is clearly before me: what I have to do is to preach and write; which I must endeavour to do more and better than hitherto; especially more in a religious spirit, with a more direct reference and desire to please God.

XCV. TO HIS MOTHER.

Bourton, December, 1815.

HONOURED MOTHER,—In this remote corner every thing almost seems to remain as when I wrote last. Thus it is from month to month. One is often struck with the thought, how little one has a perception of, amidst the infinity of things that are acting and changing, at every moment, in this vast creation. But indeed, within a comparatively small space around one, millions of acts and incidents are occurring, of which one is perfectly insensible. What processes of Nature, what movements of human minds, what agency of invisible intelligences! What a spirit would that be that should have a perfect perception, comprehending the whole and every part, of what takes place within a very small portion of even one country of the globe! What a stupendous intelligence, that should be able in this manner, to inspect the whole earth, with all its beings and elements! But, then, how overwhelming is the idea of **THAT ONE MIND**, whose perception extends *to every thing, great and little, inanimate, living, and intellectual*, in the **WHOLE UNIVERSE**, comprehending, perhaps, such a number of worlds as it would require an angel's

faculties but to *count* ! How utterly and instantly the power of thought is confounded and lost in any attempt at forming the idea of such a Being ! It is useful, nevertheless, to exercise the mind sometimes in this manner. It tends to produce humiliation and self-abasement, and to inspire a holy awe. But, also, it tends to inspire joy, and gratitude, and triumph, when we consider that this Being condescends to be the Friend of humble, and contrite, and devout men ; that He has revealed himself as a pardoning and gracious God, through the mediation of Christ ; that through this "new and living way" his throne may be approached with hope and confidence. And then, there is the sublime idea of his taking the souls of his servants, at death, to contemplate him in a more intimate manner, to be expanded to an angelic and forever enlarging capacity in that blissful contemplation and communion, and to receive to all eternity perpetually augmenting manifestations of his love. In such a view, with what emotions may you look forward to the termination of your mortal pilgrimage ! and with what grateful joy look back on that influence of divine grace, which early in life persuasively compelled you into his service, and has preserved you constant in it ever since !

I still preach, one where or other, every Sunday ; and there would be work enough of this kind within a small circuit hereabouts, for an additional supernumerary. I wish exceedingly that there were in our societies a much greater number of such sensible and educated men as might be serviceably employed in frequent preaching, without being of what is called the regular class of preachers.

My wish for this *John* would be, that he might become one day a zealous and effectual proclaimer of divine truth ; just such a one as I have before mentioned to you in the instance of a highly-cultivated young man, who is lately returned by an excursion, for improvement, through France and to Geneva. . . .

XCVI. TO HIS MOTHER.

Bourton, March, 1816.

HONOURED MOTHER, . . . Worcester is only a six or seven hours' journey from this village. The surrounding country is, in spring and summer, very beautiful. In the road between Worcester and this place is that town of *Pershore*, where I spent a number of weeks so long since,—previously to going to Ireland. Some interesting reflections were suggested to me in passing through it, and glancing over the course of the river Avon, on the banks of which I had so often walked in solitary musings, wondering what might be the appointed course of my future life in this world, and forming plans and resolutions. How little of these plans and resolutions has been accomplished! those, I mean, which ought to have been accomplished; those which were of a nature independent of the places in which I might be cast;—those which related to the efforts, the improvements, the attainments, which were my absolute duty, *wherever* I might afterwards dwell or wander. How impossible it would have then been, when I traversed those meadows, by that stream,—how impossible to believe it, if any one could have predicted to me that, passing by the place twenty-three years afterwards, I should have the mournful consciousness of having accomplished so little of all I then was so sanguine in anticipating,—if my life and health should be so long protracted by an indulgent Providence! No, I could not have believed it. I did not then know so much of the depravity, the treachery, of the heart of man.

Another thing I could hardly have believed, could it have been then predicted,—namely, that my life, *if* it should prove, for twenty years, so unprofitable, would be attended all the while, nevertheless, by so many favours of the divine Providence, so constant a train of things at once indulgent and admonitory.

And still another thing it would have been at that time impossible for me to believe, if it could have been declared to me,—that, when I should have spent twenty years so favoured and yet so unprofitable a servant, I should not feel, on the review at the beginning of the year 1816, a

much severer grief, a much intenser self-indignation, than at this hour I actually do feel. How strangely one grows accustomed to one's own faults, and perversities, and sins, so as to have a criminal patience with them. Yet though I feel far too little on such a review, I do nevertheless feel greatly indignant at this ingratitude, this indolence, this want of zeal, this wretched deficiency of every grace and virtue of Christianity. I do, in some measure, and I hope an increasing measure, hate this indwelling sin, this cold indifference, this procrastination, this dread of taking up the cross. And I do, and I hope I shall each succeeding day, more apply to the Almighty power; "fly to the Lord for quick relief." At last I hope to say, exultingly, "Sin, the monster, bleeds and dies."

We are all hereabouts, as everywhere else, deeply complaining of the times, and reproaching the bad men that preside over the state, and who manifest a scornful indifference on the subject, intent only to accomplish their own vain and vile purposes. But we are overrun with men just as unprincipled, in a lower condition. . . .

XCVII. TO HIS MOTHER.

Bourton-on-the-Water, May, 1816.

HONOURED MOTHER,—The balmy influences of spring at length breathe into the room in which I am writing, and I have just been admiring the beauty of an apple-tree, and a few other trees, now in full bloom. But this appearance has not, for a very long time, been so late in the spring. No one, scarcely, remembers so backward and ungenial a season as we have had this year. Snow has fallen within these few days. The consequence of this long rigour is, that now, when the vernal softness is at length come, the vegetation, with all its beauty, has come out as with a sudden burst; insomuch, that a very few days have made a prodigious alteration in the appearance all around; the earth seems almost as if it had undergone a miracle, in order to make it a proper place of abode for a purer, better kind of beings.

But, alas! the inhabiting beings remain the same; a debased, irreligious, iniquitous, and miserable race. Nature has no gales, no beauties, no influences, to transform the depraved mind. The benignant skies, the living verdure, the hues of flowers, the notes of birds,—have no power on selfish and malignant passions, on inveterate evil habits, on ingratitude and hostility against God. And it is all just the same, notwithstanding that the scene not only has so much beauty, and is such a manifestation of the divine power, but also is equally a display of the divine bounty, this opening beauty being a part of the grand process for the sustenance of man.

What a base and odious thing is this human nature! How multiplied and endless are the exhibitions of its abominable state! All the inhabited world is overspread with them. I feel a peculiar interest and complacency in reading (in the many books of travels that come into my hands) of wildernesses and ruins. It gratifies me to read of this or the other city or district, that, whereas it once contained perhaps a half a million of inhabitants, there are now not a fifth part of the number;—that there are towers, castles, and mansions, and temples, and streets, deserted, dilapidated, falling in ruins;—that the lonely traveller may traverse leagues and leagues of the region, and meet no face and see no abode of man. I involuntarily exclaim, “So much the better; how little there is, in that abandoned territory, of the abomination and misery with which *man* is sure to fill every place in which his race abounds!”

With something of this, mingled with other modes of interest, I read lately a small book, recently published, concerning the *Ruins of Babylon*. It is by a young man,* whom I remember seeing at Bristol ten or twelve years since, as a boy, remarkably distinguished by his eastern learning. He now resides at Bassora, only a few days’ journey from Babylon. He wrote this account after one visit of examination to the place of that proud city. The place is marked by enormous masses of bricks, the foundations of the vast edifices which in Daniel’s time towered aloft, amidst the stupendous accumulation of ordinary structures for human dwelling. There is now (as far as I re-

* The late CLAUDIUS JAMES RICH.

member) *not a man dwelling there!* In clearing some secret vaulted passages, he found several human skeletons. What a striking sight this would be! while a crowd of solemn recollections came over one's mind. In one most enormous mass of bricks, in a great measure covered with mould and vegetation, he had little doubt he beheld the remains of the celebrated tower of Nimrod. There is one part exposed, as a wall, and it is two hundred feet high.

.....

XCVIII. TO HIS MOTHER.

Bourton, August, 1816.

HONOURED MOTHER, I am still very far from having worked off my accumulated tasks in the reviewing way. I am sorry for having got so much into this kind of service; it has its uses, but it has been in some measure a prevention of things that might have been more extensively and more lastingly useful. I fully intend to withdraw, in a great measure, from the occupation, in order to attend to those more useful labours. But I have, at the very least, eight or nine months' work on hand, some parts of which have been very long, and almost inexcusably delayed. I have no power of getting fast forward in any literary task; it costs me far more labour than any other mortal who has been in the habit so long. My taskmaster complains constantly and heavily of my slowness and delay; part of which is, indeed, I confess, owing to indolence. I have probably said before, what is always unhappily true, that I have the most extreme and invariable repugnance to all literary labour of every kind, and almost all mental labour. It is the literal truth that I never, in the course of the whole year, take the pen, for a paragraph or a letter, *but as an act of force on myself*. When I have a thing of this kind to do, I linger hours and hours often before I can resolutely set about it; and days and weeks, if it is some task more than ordinary. About finding proper words, and putting them in proper places, I have more difficulty than it could have been supposed possible any one should have after

having had to work among them so long? but the grand difficulty is a downright scarcity of matter,—plainly the difficulty of finding anything to say. My inventive faculties are exactly like the powers of a snail; and in addition, my memory is an inconceivably miserable one. This last is a peculiarly grievous circumstance in the business of reviewing books. I read through a volume, and though I write short notices of the matters as I go on, when I get to the end I find I have no manner of hold, in my memory, of the contents. I have to read the greatest part of it again, and some parts probably three or four times. This was the case particularly with one of the last books I have written some account of in the *Eclectic Review*,—a splendid and very interesting volume about *Ancient Wiltshire*. . . .

. . . . The article I have referred to in the *Eclectic Review* will, I should think, be extremely interesting to every curious reader, not from any quality in the writing, but because it contains the substance of the work in question, compressed into a comparatively small space. . . . I did not mean thus to occupy my paper about a book; but really it is one of the most remarkable books I ever read, and the contents have very strongly taken possession of my imagination.

XCIX. TO HIS MOTHER.

Bourton, October, 1816.

HONOURED MOTHER,—One may wonder that, in a world so full of changes, a number of weeks should ever pass away without supplying considerable materials of record and information. In a multitude of instances such materials have not been wanting. How many persons within the last month have had to transmit to their distant relatives or friends melancholy information, sometimes expected, often unexpected. No doubt this very letter, in the course of its conveyance to you, will accompany in the post various letters, going to one place and another, with the information of the death of parents or children, husbands, wives, or other relatives; and various letters relating accidents, ca-

lamities, sicknesses, or distressing experiences of the evils of the times. And then, glancing back to the long series of letters I have sent you during so many years, and imagining how many letters, conveying the expressions of distressed persons, have so accompanied, during that whole length of time, the letters conveyed from me to you, what cause I have to wonder and be thankful that my letters have so seldom had to convey melancholy accounts or sentiments! what a life of providential indulgence mine has been! A life of health, a life of much favour from fellow-mortals, of never-failing temporal supplies, of innumerable intellectual and religious means and advantages, and nearly nine years of it passed in a happy domestic connexion. I think I do not forget any day to be grateful to Heaven for this last circumstance. My dear wife is one of the most estimable, and one of the most affectionate of her sex. I constantly feel how much she deserves to be loved, and I love her as much as in the commencement of our happy union. I often tell her fondly, how grateful I am to the Almighty that she is mine, and that she has been mine so long; only regretting, as I told her this morning, that she had not been mine earlier in life. But that was as Providence ordered it,—the same Providence which ordered that my early partialities should not result in the conjugal relation. From all the merciful care of that Providence during the past, I have very good cause to commit my way to the Lord for all the time that may yet be to come. In advancing into the darkness of futurity, I will humbly and gratefully trust that the Guardian and Guide of my life hitherto, will “never leave me nor forsake me.” And, the while, I hope to be found more faithful and diligent in his service. . . .

. . . . One of my friends is just returned from a summer excursion in France and Switzerland, and is going to betake himself, with all diligence, to the work of preaching. He preaches without any pecuniary reward, and just when and where he thinks he can do most good. Very few things have ever gratified me more than the course this excellent young man has taken. He has grown up *perfectly* free from all the vanities common among rich young men, has been the better for all the scenes and varieties he has passed through, and dedicates himself to the cause of religion with

a most serious, deliberate, and growing determination. It would be a most delightful thing to see a few of what we call gentlemen, enter life in anything like such a manner

C. TO HIS MOTHER.

Bourton, [Date uncertain.]

MY DEAR AND HONOURED MOTHER, The divine Providence has continued indulgent to us in this house, our health having been prolonged, and each domestic advantage and blessing. It is my daily wish and prayer to be more thankful, and more willingly and actively obedient. How slow is the perverse mind to yield itself, even to the most powerful attractions of goodness—when it is the goodness of the Supreme Being! The greatest of all his acts of goodness is to give a “new heart, and renew a right spirit within us.”

Though nothing unusual has taken place within our walls, a field, two or three hundred yards from the house, has presented to me a very striking spectacle. In digging for gravel there have been found, in different situations, a number of human skeletons. I have seen as many as *four* of them uncovered. One of them was within a rude structure of stones, placed somewhat in the form of a coffin. Another seemed to have been in some kind of coffin of wood, as there were several very large iron nails, and an extremely small bit of decayed wood. About the others there were no stones, nor relics of wood. They were in each instance complete, there being very little decay, excepting that the bones, of course, were in a state of separation from one another, and that the skulls were too brittle to be taken up perfectly whole. The teeth were in as perfect preservation as when the bodies were deposited. One set was remarkably fine, and being but little worn, indicated that the person was young, though of full growth. In another instance a considerable number had been lost before the person's death, and the remainder were so much worn down as to indicate a person of very considerable age.

The stature or other dimensions did not appear to be materially different from the present state of the race. There were no coins, weapons, or other circumstances to assist curiosity in the inquiry after the dates of their interment. The most natural conjecture is, that they might be Romans, as they were very near the mound of a large Roman camp, as it is judged to be. Other skeletons have, at various times, been found in these fields. One circumstance with respect to those just now found, would seem to indicate that they were the people of pagan times; they were placed mostly in a direction north and south; whereas the popish Christianity, had it then been in the country, would undoubtedly have prescribed most authoritatively that they should have been laid east and west. It may, therefore, be fairly conjectured, that they have lain quiet and unknown in these beds of dust much more, at any rate, than a thousand years. In those beds, though now in a broken and dislocated state, they are again deposited, excepting some fragments that I and Dr. S—— took away, consisting of several jaws and portions of skulls.

I have been extremely struck and interested by these spectacles, which I was glad to have the opportunity of seeing. They have much more power over the imagination than the bones that may sometimes be seen in opening or digging graves in our churchyards. To the idea of death, and human beings departed, is added, in this case, that of an unknown antiquity, that of the wonderful length of time which they have lain unseen and silent under the footsteps of many living generations in succession. The mind is absorbed in musings, inquiries, and wonderings, who they were, what were their language, religion, habits of life, personal appearance; what kind of people they were that inhabited the place around at that time. There is added the solemn idea, which occurs at the sight of any such spectacles of more modern date, that somewhere there exists at this moment, *a soul* that once inhabited this deserted form.

.... Here the gloom of approaching winter is coming fast upon us; and judging by the manner in which it affects one in even the vigour of life and health, I can partly imagine how it must affect you. I trust you will find the full effect of the consolations of piety, and the powers of

faith. . . . I earnestly wish and pray that we may all of us be devoted progressively more and more to Him who is our present happiness and our eternal life.

CL. TO THE REV. THOMAS LANGDON.

Bourton, June 18, 1817.

. . . My dear and highly respected old friend will readily believe that the invitation his letter conveys to me, gratifies all those feelings towards him and his domestic companion, and their circle of friends, which have perfectly survived so long an absence, and will survive to the end of life. But my acceptance of it is prevented by a combination of circumstances too insignificant to be recounted in detail, but all together forming an insurmountable obstruction. Some of them relate to very long engagements and tasks, of which I really must acquit myself within a short time to come, or incur much inconvenience and some discredit. I have, besides, an extreme difficulty and reluctance, which but increases with advancing life, to sustain any material part on important public occasions; and in addition, there are a number of deterring feelings and considerations arising from the changes which time and death have made in my native place.

You will have no difficulty in obtaining, nearer home, a better coadjutor in the interesting service you have in expectation. But, indeed, little will be wanting in addition, when you have the exertions of unquestionably the foremost preacher in the world. I am very glad that Hall has consented to be with you. I sincerely wish you every concurring favourable circumstance, and the utmost success in the intended institution.

I am greatly interested by the information concerning yourself and your family, and very grateful for the expressions of friendly regard from you and my dear old friend Mrs. Langdon. It pleases me too, not a little, that *Mary* can entertain what I may call a traditionary kindness for me. How vividly I recall at this moment the luxury of toying with her, and carrying her about the house, when she had

been but a short time an inhabitant of the world in which she has now lived long enough to have her youthful visions of felicity, and long enough to discover, or at least to suspect, that those flattering visions contain no small portion of delusive promise. Yet I hope the great Benefactor intends her as much felicity in this short life as can be imparted by piety, combined with the affection of the relatives and friends with whom she shall spend it. May it be long, and healthy, and useful. The same I wish for the six others that Heaven has spared you of the twelve. How much painful emotion it must have cost, to surrender in succession *five* to Him that gave them. Yet I am most confident that *now*, in thinking what a world they have left, and to what a world they are gone, both you and their other affectionate parent feel a very, very great preponderance of the consolatory over the mournful feeling.

I should have been glad, my dear friend, to have heard a better account of your health. I earnestly hope a merciful Providence will support you in a capacity of doing good to your family and your congregation for a number of years to come,—I would say, for many years yet to come. And I trust we shall all, through whatever term of life yet remains to us, be still more earnestly devoted to Him, into whose presence we hope to go when it shall terminate.

What a length of retrospect it is, back to the time that I used to mingle with so much delight in your society, your discussions, and vivacities! The ideas that arise in the review of that most animated period, and of all the stages since, are far too numerous for any attempt to note a hundredth part of them here. I do promise myself that I shall yet spend some days in the well-remembered scene of those remote years, and with you and Mrs. L., make our comparisons. . . . It is now many years since I just saw her and Mary one short moment at the end of a bad sermon I preached at Bristol; and I was extremely sorry that their appointment to leave Bristol early the following morning, made it impossible for me to have the pleasure of a real interview.

I meant to say a few things about myself, but an intrusion has left me but one moment to the post hour, and I think I ought not to delay the reply so much as one day longer. I

have general good health. The physical cause which about ten years since compelled me, most reluctantly, to give up preaching entirely for a considerable time, remains now but in so small a degree that I preach every Sunday, sometimes once, oftener twice, in the most irregular way; sometimes in the meeting-houses in the district, sometimes in school-rooms and barns.

. . . . I am in a great state of doubt and balancing whether to remove near Bristol; in which case I should preach oftener at Downend, which I dare say you remember.

I have been happy, very happy in a domestic union nearly ten years. We have three children, and have lost two. My wife remembers you, and is ready with her friendly wishes. I should be very glad to hear from you at any time you could spare the space to fill a large sheet with information respecting yourself, your family, and those old friends, of whom I cannot hope to find that all of them continue in the world. . . .

Yours, most cordially,

J. FOSTER.

CII. TO B. STOKES, ESQ.

Bourton, October 31, 1817.

. . . . As to this book of Alps, torrents, and ices. . . . I should have sent it several days since, but from the very onerous and engrossing business of making up a great number of packages of books for the transit toward Bristol. That business is, within a trifle, completed a day or two since. They are now all gone, and about arrived at their destination, but two or three dozen of volumes. They have constituted one entire wagon load, and a material portion of two others. I was myself hardly aware of the quantity which had been brought by degrees into this dark den, till they were thus summoned all out from their obscure lodgments in chests, corners, and dust; whence they have come forth, reproaching me with an expense carried, for a succession of years, beyond all conscionable bounds.

. . . But I have told you, positively, that I am now going

to adopt a decided reform. I *must* of necessity do so, whether I would otherwise choose it or not. The book herewith sent you forms a fine poetical finish to so extravagant a course; and it is yet to be *paid for*, as it *can*; I question if I dare ever tell you the price.

You will find it a thing that may boldly brave criticism. It seems to me the most exquisite thing of its class that I have ever seen. It is, by its subject, a good match and counterpart to the other which I had the pleasure of lending you—*icy* mountains contrasted with *burning* ones. But you will readily perceive that this is of very considerably more refined and delicate execution than Hamilton's.

With a softness which I have never seen equalled but in the best water-colour paintings, it has an admirable distinctness and precision of delineation, insomuch that the small human figures, goats, houses, &c. &c. will bear inspection through a considerably magnifying glass. This is owing, in good part, to the very fine *engraving* which forms the *basis* on which the colours are laid. Its defect is the want of about fifty pages of letter-press description, in French, which accompanied the plates at their publication, but which, from what cause I have no guess, are much oftener wanting than inserted in the copies on the Continent—as the bookseller, a man of character, I believe, assures me he knows to be the case. . . . Each plate has the pompous circumstance of a dedication to some high personage or other. This, however, tended to insure their being all executed with great care. One among the latest is inscribed to the unfortunate Louis XVI., in the year 1793, which proves that the work was long in publishing, for the publication commenced soon after 1780. Wolff, the draughtsman of the greatest number of them, was a landscape painter of high reputation, and I have seen the testimony of the very celebrated naturalist and philosopher, Baron Haller, that the drawings were of the highest merit in point of fidelity; and he had observantly traversed the scenes, he says, a number of times. . . .

CHAPTER VI.

SECOND RESIDENCE AT DOWNEND—RELINQUISHMENT OF THE PASTORAL OFFICE—BIBLE SOCIETY MEETING—MISSIONARY DISCOURSE—ESSAY ON POPULAR IGNORANCE—EXCURSION TO DEVON AND CORNWALL—REMOVAL TO STAPLETON—LECTURES—ESSAY TO DODDRIDGE'S RISE AND PROGRESS OF RELIGION—HIS SON'S ILLNESS AND DEATH.

1817—1826.

MR. FOSTER'S long practice in village preaching, and habitual endeavour to accommodate his diction and mode of illustration to unlettered congregations, might reasonably have led him to hope, that in the scene of his former labours he would not be wholly unsuccessful; yet scarcely six months had elapsed when the failure of his efforts was so evident, that he could not hesitate on the propriety of relinquishing the situation. Several of his more intelligent and serious hearers of the class whose benefit he had chiefly laboured to promote, were withdrawn either by death or a change of residence; others ceased to attend, from a preference for a style of preaching more adapted to operate on the feelings than to promote a thoughtful piety; and of those whom habit brought weekly to their usual seats, several showed an utter listlessness more depressing than their absence, which would have at least allowed the charitable hope, that they were deriving some benefit elsewhere. In communicating his determination to resign in a letter to Dr. Bompas, he remarks, "It will be recollected that I was very far from sanguine in commencing it, but I really did not anticipate quite so complete a failure; I *did*

fancy it possible, that a natural manner of speaking, that illustrations and pointed applications, tending to preclude the too usual dulness and formality of religious discourse, and that a language generally clear of hard or fine words, might perhaps engage in some considerable degree the attention of even uncultivated minds; and indeed I think I have hardly preached in any other place where they did not engage it somewhat more than they have done here. . . . It cannot be honestly denied, that by the application of a great deal of time and effort, a more obvious and attractive mode of exhibiting religious subjects would be attainable (that is, as a *habitual* strain, for *some* of my sermons I should perhaps consider as in this respect nearly as much adapted as I could well make them), but I cannot feel the duty of making a laborious effort to change my manner for the sake of attracting persons to whom it would after all be less attractive than the very crudest exhibition at the Methodist meeting,—persons, too, who are no longer in the way for being attracted, and who will, for the most part, never come again in the way;—I cannot feel the duty, unless it were impossible for me to be in any place to which I should be more adapted, and unless I felt it a compulsory duty at all events to preach. . . . On a deliberate view of the whole case, then, I am impelled to the practical conclusion I have expressed above, that I must retire from the service within some short time. I am sure that you and my other estimable friends will believe me when I say, that so far as my high and grateful regard for them is concerned, I shall execute this determination with very great regret. For a small circle of such friends, and such partial auditors, I cannot look elsewhere. Their value and their kindness will make me willing to protract a few months longer, a service which I should otherwise feel the propriety of declining immediately.

"As yet I have no plan with respect to ulterior public employment. That must be left to Providence, and the course of time. In one way and place, or another, I will hope to be made of some use to the best cause."

It was about this time, that he was invited to take a part in the anniversary of a Bible Society meeting at Kingswood. In his reply, he explained to the respected individual by whom the request was conveyed, the physical debility which of itself would form a valid reason for declining the service, and then added, "After a clear exemption made out on a personal ground, it may seem almost impertinent to make any remark on the general subject. And I shall allow myself but very few words in the way of suggesting, that according to the feeling of the great majority of the persons attending these meetings, there are too many speakers, instead of a scarcity of them, and a far too protracted indulgence in making speeches. My own opinion, or taste, in the matter, may perhaps partake of perversity or whim,—but I will acknowledge I utterly loathe and abominate the prevailing spirit and manner of these meetings. From all I have seen of them, they appear to me to be, in a greater degree than they are any thing else, exhibitions of vanity, cajolery, and ostentation. The ludicrous aping of the forms and ceremonial of the chief legislative assemblies,—the rattling and clapping,—the sort of prize-speech-making, in which it is often so palpably evident that the speaker's object is to just *shine*,—the fulsome dealing round of extravagant compliment,—all these give, to say the least, a farcical and operative cast to the whole concern (in many instances, at least, I have felt this the irresistible impression), and form, in my apprehension, a flagrant abandonment of dignity, sense, and honest truth. That money is obtained, and the popularity of the good cause promoted, every good man must rejoice; but he must lament the necessity, if it be

such, that so much of the agency for doing this good should consist in men's helping to inflate one another's vanity, and turning important matters into parading show and exhibition." *

The preceding correspondence contains intimations of Mr. Foster's wishes to be disengaged from the labours of periodical criticism, and to devote himself to the preparation of works of permanent and independent interest. Whether he would have overcome the aversion to the mental toil involved in authorship (an aversion, reiterated so often in his letters), without some extraneous inducement, may be fairly doubted. The two productions, which, after so long an interval, followed the Essays, were both in consequence of his being solicited to advocate from the pulpit two public institutions. His discourse on Missions was delivered in September, 1818; and his sermon on behalf of the British and Foreign School Society (which he enlarged into his Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance), in the following December. The latter work was published in 1820. In writing to Mr. Hughes, while it was passing through the press, he says, "Thus far I have found more than half the original sentences either actually faulty, or at least admitting of what I thought improvement. The first composition was most tediously slow, and there is many a page, as it now stands, which has cost still more time and labour in the revisal than in the first writing. On the whole, these last six months about, have been a season of very great labour, and therefore very resolute self-denial,—no one can imagine how much both of one and the other. If in respect to the matter of emolument, it is as poorly repaid *as in the case of last year's 'Discourse,'* which was also a thing of very great labour,† I must even have

* To the Rev. Michael Maurice, May 20, 1818.

† "I have honestly been endeavouring to be very busy upon a discourse (so to be called) of enormous length, and in every part of which my best

recourse to the old principle of 'virtue its own reward;' for never was labour, in the lucrative respect, worse remunerated. It is a far easier thing, I warrant, to assume a cajoling tone, and—'Why don't you write?'—'We should be glad to see you far oftener in print;'—'How can you satisfy your conscience not to do more for the public good?'—and stuff like this—a far easier thing than to let go a few shillings when one *has* done something of the kind referred to. Yet many a person has believed himself administering the sweetest spoonfuls to my vanity by palavering me in this hypocritical strain. I have had a great deal too much politeness to answer, 'Did you *purchase* what I printed some time since?' I have really let them go off with the double gratification of believing they bubbled *me*, and knowing they saved *their money*.

"The expression, 'if you have succeeded,' in your letter,*

efforts to get on have only been as if running for a wager with a snail. There are yet several weeks' work before it can be handled by a printer. To me the *day-light* is the only season of my privilege for composition of anything of the better sort, and therefore I have gone no whither in *that* light for a good while past. A lamentable allotment of it it is that the sun affords us just at this season."—*Mr. Foster to the Rev. Josiah Hill.*

* "Though I surveyed the revised sheet already printed, it was under circumstances that did not allow me to catch the train of thought. *If you have succeeded*, many will exult, for the subject is one of high moment. But then I know not whether I can trust the *radical* digits employed in the business; occupied as they so often are in reading what it might be better for them to modify. Talent, John, involves, solemn responsibility. Why will not its possessors so use it as to do the utmost good with the slightest mixture of alloy? Here is this *Hall*. If he would but write more, do you not perceive that he would be hailed as a general benefactor; no readers having occasion to make large deductions on the score of *confining or revolting peculiarities*? The fact is, *he generalises himself*; he soars above the partisan; he corrects without provoking; he is intent on establishing a proposition, on demolishing vice, on doing infinite good. Hence his wide acceptableness—his usefulness and the clamorous demands of the public on his renewed exertions.

"You have only to adopt *sacred politics*, and thoroughly to *Christianise* all your feelings, in order to become, I say not Hall's rival, but his coadjutor; and with him to form a brace of writers to whom the present and future generations would be incalculable debtors."—*The Rev. Joseph Hughes to Mr. Foster, March 27, 1820.*

leads me to observe, that I certainly *have* succeeded in the main and substantial thing proposed, and professed in the title (of this thing in the press). I have given a broad, true, and strongly delineated picture of the intellectual and moral state of the mass of our people. It was *matter of fact*, and only required the power of placing in a strong light, and in proper order, what had come, and is at any time coming, within one's own observation. No doubt, I have also been in the habit of catechizing other observers, some of them much more familiar I confess, than myself, with the classes in question. I am quite sensible there is no great share of what would be called brilliance in this production,—I perhaps persuade myself that the subject was most unfavourable for much of that kind, but I am rather confident there is much force and truth of representation. And I shall have and *retain* a higher respect for my own than for the reader's judgment, if he does not think the *style* better than that of most of my contemporaries. It has one quality which I must probably be content to perceive, or at least to approve, myself; for I do not expect any critic or reader to take due cognizance of it—namely, that the language is simply and absolutely formed for the thought,—is adapted and flexible to it,—is taken out of the whole mass of the vocabulary of our tongue just on purpose for the thoughts, and moulded, if I may so speak, to their very shape, with an almost perfect independence and avoidance of all the set, artificial forms of expression,—and yet it is not wild and wanton, but merely natural and free. But my saying this recalls to my remembrance, that an Edinburgh critic (in the Edinburgh Monthly Review) *dis* seem to have a kind of clumsy apprehension (in the 'Discourse') of the quality which I have chosen to describe as a merit in style; and he had the good taste to take it for a fault, and identified it, if I recollect, with the lawless dash-

ing and affectation of modern would-be-fine writing. But all this is exceedingly foreign to the monitory topics of your letter.

“You are afraid the production cannot have escaped some of the defilement of *radicalism*. I may assure you that in *one* way it is as clear of any such thing as if it had been written by yourself, or Hall, or Cunningham, or my good old friend Zach. Macauley. It is, I suppose, a *sine quâ non* of radicalism (how eagerly, for change, this foolish term has been seized upon—*Jacobinism* being quite worn out in thirty years’ service), an essential, is it not? that there should be a systematic lauding and extolling of *the people*, a trumpeting of their virtues, wisdom, rights, &c., &c.; whereas, from beginning to end, I exhibit the People as odiously and loathsomely vile and degraded and depraved; insomuch that, while intending it, and knowing it for mere truth, I have yet been sometimes apprehensive of incurring the imputation of having some special spite at the people, some actual revenge, to be wreaked on them in a book, for want of such means of infliction as the Manchester parsons employed, and the Clapham and Battersea parsons approve their having employed—as how should they do otherwise than approve, for Vansittart is of the Bible Society, and I think even Castlereagh has speechified for it,—and *they* approved that mode of disciplining the people?

“I exhibit the people as debased vicious and abominable; but why have they been *suffered* to be so,—in this hideous degree? Where has been the grand cause and the wickedness of their being allowed to continue in vile and wretched barbarism from generation to generation? It may be of the nature of radicalism (for it is not yet settled how much that vice comprehends), that in *this* reference, recurring several times at intervals, I have uttered divers sentences of indignant invective? And how, I wonder, was this to be

avoided? In a brief review of the state of the people, in this powerful, *enlightened, protestant*, country, the mass of the people are seen, in frightful sameness, from one age to another, sunk in the most barbarous ignorance, with its appropriate depravities. Now, was this to be represented as a bare fact, as if it had been a series of unfavourable seasons, as a thing for which there was nowhere any accountableness, a thing which there were no means and no duty of causing to be otherwise? Was the reader to be left to lament, in his simplicity, that there had not, during so many ages, been a strong government in the land, that there had not been a religious establishment, great seminaries of learning, great revenues applicable to the national welfare, a great power of influence of the upper classes (not solely the government) over the lower? No, simple reader, you are to know that there *were* all these fine things, that these things have been to this hour; but that they have been so much better occupied than about the improvement of the people, that said people have been suffered to continue a moral nuisance on the face of the earth; and yet, all the while, there has been a furious rant about the glory of England. It obstinately *will* appear to me, that it were infinitely silly for a writer, who is taking a view of the melancholy and horrid fact of the past and present intellectual and moral state of the people, to fancy himself required, by some kind of delicacy or homage to the pride and self-complacency of church-folk, and, perhaps great folk, to keep out of sight (even if it were possible) so large and essential a part of his subject, as *the grand cause why the dreadful state of things which he exhibits has been what it has*. If he were just only making, to a mixed assembly of persons, an appeal for local charity, it would be quite a different affair; he would then have to consult the *policy* of the moment. But this winter's job of mine has been a

quite different sort of thing; an attempt to display, in a brief, but somewhat comprehensive manner, in the spirit of a moral censor, combined with something of the office of a historian, a mighty evil, *in its existence as a fact, and in its relations of cause and consequence*. Now, unless we are forbidden to take such a subject, such a grand matter of fact, that is to say, at last, are forbidden to take *any* subject otherwise than as clipped down to the part of it which you may exhibit and displease nobody,—unless it is wrong to take such a subject on this large ground, it is plainly impossible for you to withhold the most emphatically condemnatory references to *that* in the nation, which might and should have *prevented* its being in so horrid a condition;—to that economy of government and church of which it was *the sole and express business* to see to the nation's welfare and improvement, together with that great power of influence, by which the higher ranks (considered *not* in an *official* capacity) might have mightily promoted that improvement.

“ ‘Generalize yourself,’ say you? Why, my good friend, the very mirror and perfection as you are, of what the Clapham high-church-and-state junto would wish a dissenter and reformist to be, you would have tight work to *generalize* on the brutal ignorance and barbarism of a parish, for a hundred years running, without a single glance at the *ecclesiastical institution* established in that parish, and richly fed with its tithes, for the very purpose of taking care of the souls of the people. For myself, I have no such petty concern as to be on good terms with that or any other junto; my business I took to be, to state the fact and the truth, comprehensively and strongly, whomever it might displease or please.

“ Yet as to this pleasing and displeasing, you really seem, from so much intercourse and favour with a particular class

—the evangelical church-people, the grossest sycophants of power, and defenders of the whole vast system of corruption—to have come to identify *them* with every thing of which the opinion is worth regarding in the land. But do you, indeed, make nothing of all that mental excitement, that augmenting stream of opinion and detestation, and that gradual course of events, which are driving with destructive direction, against that state of things which these devotees to every thing established are so fervently worshipping? Do you really, as I suppose *they* do, think that after a while all this will be quelled and sink into the earth or go off in vapour into the air; to leave, in tranquil permanence, just the order of things which Wilberforce, Vansittart, . . . and the like, make it a good part of their religion to defend? I ask this simply in reference to the point of *policy*, in a writer's making no scruple of showing himself the enemy of that system, when he is on topics which *cannot* be treated comprehensively without *some* kind of reference to the manner in which the presiding power and institutions of the country have affected the matters in question.

“You remonstrate against ‘*confining and revolting peculiarities.*’ *Peculiarities?* that should imply something in which a man has very few to partake or coincide with him. Think of this! as applied to my opinion, relatively, for instance, to the effect which the Established Church has had on the knowledge and religion of the mass of the English people for several ages back! or, to my estimate and remarks, as to what one-tenth part of the several thousands of millions sterling which the state has expended in *war*, during the past century, would have done, if applied to the direct improvement of the people! Revolting peculiarities! What company can you have been keeping?”

In the autumn of 1819, Foster spent several weeks in an excursion to the most remarkable points of the Devonshire

and Cornwall coast. In a letter written to Mr. Hughes, on his way home (dated Ilfracombe, Sept. 21, 1819), he says, "A very loud internal admonition urges my return to the dreaded business of mental and literary task-work. I shall be very glad, however, to have made this long excursion, through scenes which I had very often greatly wished to see, and with no immediate hope; much less could I have any anticipation, that a person whom I have never seen nor heard of, a few months previously, should make me the liberal offer of taking a circuit of five or six hundred miles, entirely at his expense. The offer was made in so perfectly easy and unostentatious a manner, and the course of the tour was so perfectly the thing that I had long wished, that I had not a moment's hesitation, provided my good wife's health would allow my going so far and long from home. The luxury has been very great, of beholding so many scenes of land and sea, and rocks, castles, and other antiquities, under the advantage of constantly favourable weather, good health, and providential protection against all disastrous and even incommodious incidents. If I live to do something more in the way of attempting to instruct the public, I have no doubt this series of beautiful and magnificent visions will contribute now and then something in the way of useful ornament or illustration."

The *Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance* was published in 1820, and in the autumn, Mr. Foster began to revise it for a second edition, a task which occupied him for several months. "You will envy the felicities of quill-driving," he says, in a letter to Mr. Stokes (March 15, 1821), "when I confess to you, that ever since before I wrote to you,* perhaps about the end of October, I have

* "It happens somehow that I never seem to have an exact notion how even my own paragraphs will tell, till I see them in print, and after they come to be there, I have very little disposition to look at them. The

literally been at the very job which I then mentioned I had begun, and which is at this very hour several weeks short of its termination. I have actually been at it without intermission, or leisure to read a newspaper, review, or any thing else. And I am quite certain I never underwent the same quantity of hard labour within the same number of weeks together in my whole life. On entering thoroughly into the job, with a determination to work it so that I should *never* have any more trouble about it, I found it such a business as I had little reckoned upon. My principle of proceeding was to treat no page, sentence, or word, with the smallest ceremony; but to hack, split, twist, prune, pull up by the roots, or practise any other severity on whatever I did not like. The consequence has been alterations to the amount very likely of several thousands. There is no essential change, however, on a large scale; the series of thoughts is the same, but with innumerable modifications of adjustment and expression; and with so many small and, here and there, considerable enlargements, that the Essay on Popular Ignorance has distended itself under the process, and notwithstanding many condensations, from three hundred to four hundred pages. The printing of this is nearly completed; the introductory part of the *Missionary Discourse* has undergone a similar handling; but the printer having lately at my remonstrance, very much accelerated his part of the business, I shall be obliged to pass, with very slight operation, over more than the latter half of the said discourse. I must let it take its

significant hints of friends, however, and the outright assailments of enemies (all critics are such, of course, that do not praise one, and that whole and entire), have compelled me to examine, and try what can be done. And I suppose they must have been all quite in the right, for to calculate on the experiment on about fifty pages, there will be, smaller and larger, far between one and two thousand touches of tinkering by the time the volume is completed."—*Mr. Foster to B. Stokes, Esq., Dec. 20, 1820.*

fortune, on the strength of the rigorous discipline given to all the preceding portion of the volume. It is a sweet luxury, this book-making; for I dare say I could point out scores of sentences *each* one of which has cost me *several hours* of the utmost exertion of my mind to put it in the state in which it now stands, after putting it in several other forms, to each one of which I saw some precise objection, which I could, at the time, have very distinctly assigned. And in truth there are hundreds of them to which I could make objections as they *now* stand, but I did not know how to hammer them into a better form."

At Michaelmas, 1821, Foster removed from Downend to Stapleton, within three miles of Bristol. To a residence in the city itself he had a most decided dislike, partly on the score of health, and partly from dread of idle morning visitors.

In the following year (1822), he complied with the solicitations of his friends in Bristol, to deliver a lecture once a fortnight at Broadmead Chapel. It was so arranged as to interfere as little as possible with the services in other places of worship, by which means an audience was formed, which, though not numerous, contained probably a greater proportion of intelligent and educated persons than most single congregations could have furnished. The preacher was aware, that he was addressing friends, or persons who, from their knowledge of him as an author, felt no ordinary interest in listening to his instructions. He acceded to undertake this service perhaps with greater readiness from having previously formed the intention of publishing a volume of discourses. "If I can bring myself," he says to Mr. Hughes (April 27, 1821), "some time hence to the business of writing once more, I think the next attempt must be, a volume of Discourses, or Sermons turned Essays

in default of my having done any thing of consequence for so long a time in the pulpit." To another friend he says,* "At the beginning of the year I was requested by a sort of association of friends in the city to undertake a lecture (that is to say, a sermon) once a fortnight to a congregation quite miscellaneous, and in the most perfect sense of the word, *voluntary*. This was much the kind of thing that I could have wished, under my physical incompetence to the usual frequency of what is called *stated* service—together with my indisposition and consciously deficient adaptedness to it. As to the *studious* part of the concern, however, this one discourse a fortnight costs me as much labour perhaps as it is usual to bestow on the five or six sermons exacted in the fortnight of a preacher's life. If I shall have competent health for the required labour of composition, I may probably try to put a selection of these discourses into the shape of a printed volume or more, in the course of time." A few months later, he repeats his intention of publishing, but adds, "It will be most slow and oppressive toil."†

At the end of two years, Mr. Foster found that his state of health would only allow of his delivering a monthly lecture. "I had fully made up my mind," he informs Mr. Hill, "to an entire discontinuance of that service. But after having signified so, I had one evening a 'deputed' party of the Bristol friends here, to persuade me to the contrary; to persuade, as the first object, a continuance as before, once a fortnight; and failing of that, in the next place, to continue the service at least once a month; to which latter appointment I was not able to refuse acceding. And therefore, for this year, so it is to be. You ask whether 'the end was better than the beginning.' If simply the last discourse be the point of the question, I think

* July 3, 1822.

† To Mr. Hill, Nov. 1822.

I may answer in the affirmative. I had a splendid subject—the three *Methodists* of Babylon in the ‘fiery furnace;’ and perhaps I thought, and *perhaps* some of the auditors thought, that I did it tolerable justice.* This was no appropriate Christmas subject; but I began by briefly ‘showing cause’ why no special regard was due to the day.”† On Mr. Hall’s settling in Bristol he at once relinquished this engagement. “I have made an end of lecturing,” he tells Mr. Stokes; “it had been, from the first movement of the question of Hall’s coming, my determination to do so, in that event; such a service appearing to me altogether superfluous, and even bordering on impertinent. I shall now have very little preaching ever, probably, any more; and shall apply myself, as well as I can, to the mode of intellectual operation, of which the results may extend much further and last much longer.”‡

Mr. Foster’s pen, however, even before the termination of the Lectures, had not been wholly unemployed for the public. Not to mention his contributions to the *Ecclectic Review*, it was during this period that he wrote a theological essay, which, in point of direct religious utility, has been surpassed by none of his writings—his introduction to Doddridge’s *Rise and Progress of Religion*. “Between two and three years since, at least,” he informs Mr. Sheppard,§ “I promised Mr. Collins, of Glasgow, to write a piece or two for his reprints of some of the valuable older religious books, of which he has already republished a considerable number, with, in each instance, a prefixed essay by one or other of our contemporary manufacturers of composition. Not without some reluctance on my part, he fixed Doddridge’s

* Lecture XV. in the *Second Series of Lectures delivered at Broadmead Chapel*, published in 1847.

† To Mr. Hill, January 26, 1824.

‡ To Mr. Stokes, Jan. 3, 1826.

§ To Mr. Sheppard, May 10, 1825.

Rise and Progress on me. *I* was soon to write the introductory essay (or whatever such a nondescript kind of thing ought to be called), and *he* would soon print the book. He did his part with a despatch not at all pleasing to me, and actually the whole large edition has been lying as dead stock in the warehouse for two years, in default of my task being performed. Again and again he has written, and I have been too much ashamed even to answer his letters, though expressed in the most mild and friendly spirit. Bad health, to which I find that mental labour is *just* poison (to use a Scotch adverb), has been in alliance with my horror of composition—and so the procrastination has gone on, one six months after another, while I have felt ashamed, and mortified, and self-reproached, at being thus the cause of a very serious loss, in the plain trade sense, to Chalmers and Collins. At last, however, these feelings, together with the excellent man's expostulations and remonstrances, have had the effect of driving me to try an attempt at the unwelcome service, and I have been for a number of weeks at the task, and a most melancholy one it has been, both for slow hard toil, and the little value of the result." To Mr. Hill, he says (July 11), "In my last I befooled myself once again in my reckoning about the termination of the task-work. That *great event* is still several weeks off, three at the least—probably more. There have, to be sure, been sundry days of interrupted or remitted industry; but mainly I have been at it. I find far more revision and correction necessary in transcribing for the press, than I had expected, notwithstanding the warning of all former experience. Several parts, thus far, I have had to write anew, and differently; minor corrections to an endless amount. The thing will be longer than I had thought or intended; it will be as much, probably, as 120 pages. My *master* from Glasgow was here a few days since, and seemed to be content to put the

cudgel in the corner, on finding that the thing was *bond fide* almost done. To think how much ado, of talking, fretting, pacing the room morning and night, pleading excuse from preaching and visiting, setting aside of plans for South Wales, &c., &c.,—and all for what?—a preface to Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*! And a preface bearing no reference to the book—a preface having absolutely no assignable object or topic! Indeed this last circumstance—of having no object—has been one of the grand grievances. If one has a topic, there is some definite thing to aim at. But when it is just saying, “You, all of you, *ought to be religious!*” you are on a ground where you have no pathway, no direction, no one thing to drive at; one thing may just as well be said as another; it is matter of chance *what* you shall think to say; and often you are, that is, *I am*, in a perfect vacancy, and have *nothing* to say. Save me, ever henceforward, from the ground of flat, interminable common-place!” In the following October, he informs the same friend, “That fag which I had confidently reckoned on ‘getting through by April, by May, by June, and lastly, time enough, at all events, to revisit you in Pembrokeshire, held me till about six weeks ago, when I sent the last few pages to bring the thing through the press. It stretched, and thinned, and languished out to the length of about 160 printed pages. . . . I have a very moderate estimate of the performance, except in ~~point~~ of correctness and condensation. It was almost all laboured at under a miserable feeling of contraction and sterility. Still I venture to think there are parts of it for which it must be the fault of the readers if they be not the better. I do not know whether I shall be induced to do, on a much more confined scale of extent, another thing or two for the same employers. But, indeed, I shall have to see whether they will ask me.” . . .

In all the relations of domestic life, Mr. Foster found

ample cause for satisfaction and gratitude; but during his residence at Downend, the uncertain tenure of the purest of earthly enjoyments was painfully indicated by the state of Mrs. Foster's health, which often excited considerable apprehensions. His own frame also, as the preceding extracts show, had suffered not slightly from long-continued and severe mental application. It was, however, not till a few years after their removal to Stapleton, that the family circle was broken by the removal of their only son. His education was carried on at home (a short period excepted), till he was placed under Mr. Bullar's care, at Southampton. Here he continued till the spring of 1825, when symptoms of incipient disease, accompanying a too rapid growth, occasioned his return to the parental roof. It is the testimony of his highly respected instructor, that he was "a boy of good parts, and of a strong and clear understanding, but a most remarkably reserved disposition. Of the discourses which he heard, and of the other religious instruction that he habitually received, he always gave so clear and well-arranged an account, as to prove that he both attended to and understood them."* In a few months he appeared so far recovered that his parents ventured to place him in the Protestant Dissenters' Grammar School at Mill Hill. "I hope John and you," his father writes to the editor, "will be under the same roof about twenty hours after the time that I am writing this note. I cannot at all pretend to say whereabouts in the classes he will be properly entered. A few questions of the tutors to himself as to what he has done, will soon determine the matter. I am sorry that he will not commence on higher ground. From the want of any school during many of his earlier years, and from partly my indolence and partly my occupations, he did not begin

* Lay Lectures on Christian Faith and Practice, by JOHN BULLAR, Southampton, 1844, page 493.

the course of any thing to be called learning till long after the proper time of his boyhood. And indolence has been, as to himself, rather too palpable a quality he has inherited from me. Any unadroitness which he may betray at first, will be fairly in part attributable to his having been really and physically disabled for application for the greatest part of the last three months. I had intended to have kept him in hard exercise during the interval between his leaving Southampton and going to Mill Hill; but the illness that brought him prematurely home, and the subsequent long debility from which he is but barely now recovered, would have made that impossible, even if it had not been judged beneficial for him to go on the long visit to Bourton, and if I had not been all this while miserably occupied about—you know what.”*

After having been at Mill Hill only a few weeks, he relapsed into debility, accompanied by cough and the rupture of a blood-vessel. A visit to Lyme appeared to be of some service, and he regained somewhat of his strength before the approach of winter, but was still incapable of any considerable exertion. Though by taking every precaution the progress of disease was in a measure retarded, the symptoms reappeared more decidedly in the ensuing spring and summer. “You kindly inquire after our John,” Mr. Foster writes to Mr. Hill, “whom the Sovereign hand has stricken. He returned hither, by a tedious and painful journey, after a sojourn of ten weeks on the coast, reduced to much greater weakness than when he went. It will be a satisfaction to have made the experiment, but it has been of no avail. He is unable to walk upstairs to bed; and is as thin and pallid as, almost, it seems possible for a living person to be. The plain and mournful truth is, that there is not the slightest probability

* To the Editor, July 25, 1825.

of anything now to follow but a gradual decline, or a sudden fall, into the bed of dust.

"How melancholy it is to behold him thus evidently sinking under the fatal pressure! And I am anxiously concerned that his dear mother, in her feebleness of body, with a spirit habitually tending to droop, and so long oppressed and almost exhausted by care, and vigilance, and hopelessness for him, should not also be reduced to such debility as would become serious illness.

"In this extinction of all hope of his life, our chief solicitude is respecting his higher and future interests. His situation has not been declared to him in the most plain and absolute terms, but strongly intimated; and I believe his own internal presages are to the same effect. But I feel it my painful duty to lay aside, without further delay, all equivocal language,—not, however, expecting he will feel any surprise. . . . He has been a good boy, remarkably free from all but the very minor faults of moral character; of sober disposition, perfectly obedient, and, I believe, of good intention. That such a mind should feel any violent sense of guilt, or overwhelming terrors of divine justice, it would be out of all consistency to expect or require. But I *am* anxious that he should feel an impressive *general* conviction of a depraved and unworthy nature, and the necessity of pardon and reconciliation through Jesus Christ;—that he should especially be sensible of the evil and guilt of a deficient love and devotion to God, and of the indisposition to apply the thoughts, desires, and earnest efforts to the grand business of life. This order of conviction and solicitude I wish and pray that he may feel, and then, after a life so nearly blameless, in a *practical* view, I should be greatly consoled and assured. My apprehensions of the extent of divine mercy, and of the terms of hope and safety for poor mortals, are widely

remote from the austerity of the systematic divines.”— Within little more than a month from the date of this letter, the event anticipated took place, though not till the hearts of his parents had been relieved from their deepest anxiety, and delightfully consoled by receiving from their son the calm, unreserved expressions of Christian faith and hope. Five days after his decease, his father wrote, “John has left us now (all but his wan, insensible form), no more to return. . . . The last complete sentence he uttered was, ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth.’ This was near the close; he retained his faculties till within the very last hour; then, about midnight, seemed to sleep; and expired, I believe, without the sense of suffering. . . . My interest in the accumulation of valuable books in this room will be sensibly lessened by the extinction of the anticipation of their being hereafter a source of instruction and gratification to him. He needs now no such means of knowledge. And how many things by this time he knows, which no books can tell! Late in his illness he mentioned it as one pleasing circumstance in the idea of the superior world, that knowledge will beam into the soul without the slow labour of difficult acquisition.”*

LETTERS.

CHIL. TO B. STOKES, ESQ.

Downend, May 5, 1818.

My very worthy friend and brother-in-law, Dr. Cox, is in a state which reduces to these very three months the utmost calculation for his life, in the opinions of his medical friends, and I should feel a long absence and excursion of

* To the Editor, Oct. 10, 1826.

amusement, just at such a season, incompatible with the interest and attention justly claimed by such a situation, to say nothing of the many obligations I owe to his kindness. The progress of his decline to his present condition has been through constantly aggravating, and recently quite dreadful, suffering, from some malady still very uncertain to medical judgment, but probably the heart or its immediate vicinity. He has intervals of alleviation, but the grand cause is still working on, and the only uncertainty of anticipation is judged to lie between a speedy and sudden termination and a protraction of extreme and frequently recurring sufferings through a space of several months.

. . . . The fine book was delivered safe, and is now in its appropriate box in this garret. It does not, on re-inspection, appear of diminished excellence from my having seen many fine things in the interval of its absence, nor as compared with one or two most admirable and splendid things which have also found their way into this garret, and were never inhabitants of that other spiders' palace which I left six months since.

. . . . But I have gone on beyond any fair proportion of talk about myself. I am also at the end of my time, as it will be desirable to get a place in Broadmead Meeting this evening *an hour* before the time for the commencement of the service. I have seen a good deal of this intellectual giant.* His health is better than some time past. His mind seems of an order fit with respect to its intellectual powers to go directly among a superior rank of intelligences in some other world, with very little requisite addition of force.

CIV. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Downend, Nov. 19, 1818.

MY DEAR FRIEND, I really did "*dare*" to anticipate success in my application for Howe's Works. But since you seem on that subject as impracticable as Capt. Ross has just found the barrier to the entrance so confidently

* HALL.

expected into the Polar Sea, I have now to renew the application in a much humbler form,—for I cannot surrender the object altogether. . . .

It is considerably an object to me to *have* the works of that man; but it is also a condition of their being of any material use to me, to have them in the *older form*, for the plain good reason that the new edition is printed in a type too small for the weakness of my eyes; I could not read such a book an hour without their warning me to shut it up. But really I have no certainty that you will not take this for *mere pretence*. You have quite a habit, I have observed, of putting such a construction, when any previously formed opinion requires to be maintained by that interpretation. You never really believed, at least to the extent of the most moderate terms in which I described it, my alleged physical difficulty and inconvenience in public speaking,—an inconvenience of which all the imputations of pretence and caprice are by far the least of the grievances. The same imputation of *pretence* you made, I recollect, on my alleged reason for declining, some time last year, I think, to go to Horsley to meet Dr. Chalmers, when my foot was swelled, and under medical treatment for a recent accident so injurious that I feel the bad effects of it at this very hour, after an hour's walk, and fear that I shall feel them as long as I live.* But enough of this. The present object is to obtain a copy of Howe's Works which I can read with some degree of convenience; and that cannot be the new edition. At the same time I must acknowledge that there is with me another point of preference in the old edition; namely, that in ~~the~~ *new* one, I recollect the Editor engaged, as a favour to the readers, to make (and I suppose he did make) some little tinkering of the long, involved, and grotesquely-constructed sentences; a thing sufficiently wanted, I allow, for it is quite wonderful that such a man as Howe should have

* "Chalmers was, the last two Sundays and the intermediate week, at or near Horsley, where he has a sister. He preached on both these Sundays for Winterbotham, who came hither with a gig to take me to Horsley in the intermediate week; but in the state my foot was then in, I felt it quite out of the question to go to a distance from remedies and the doctor. If the *lower* end had permitted, the *upper* might assuredly have gained very considerable advantage from the society of that strong-minded Scotchman."—*Mr. Foster to B. Stokes, Esq., Bourton, May, 1817.*

bungled so sadly in the manner of sentence-making. But, nevertheless, I should prefer having his paragraphs just as he had made them, to *any* Editor's rectification of them,—a preference, however, which cannot be supposed to be felt by any gentlemen of the literary firm of Burder and Hughes, the Editors and *correctors* of *Henry's Exposition*.

. . . . I do not know whether it may at all avail me to set up any defence in answer to your impeachment for lavish and inexcusable expense in matter of graphical art; which impeachment would have been in much stronger terms if you had seen *all* the acquisitions of that kind, with an inventory of *prices*. My defence would very honestly begin with an acknowledgment of the justice of the accusation to *some certain extent*, and an avowal of most sincere intentions of *reformation*. Old *Conscience* has often been saying something on the matter. But it does not by any means identify itself in its terms of reprehension with the external accuser, as to the *degree* of the criminality. For one thing, supposing the indulgence in question were considered as a mere personal gratification. I have to say that during the period of this luxurious indulgence (the last eight or nine years) I have been *in all other* personal expenses far below any other man I know, who might be in tolerable pecuniary condition. I have cared nothing for furniture, or any of the paraphernalia of what is called genteel life; and especially have spent nothing, with about one solitary exception, in the great luxury of travelling, while all around me have been making excursions of pleasure, and of pleasure grafted on business, in this direction, and in that—to London, or Paris, or the Lakes, or twenty other ways. Directly *as substitutes* (and substitutes not to be consumed in the using) for such indulgences, some of my graphical purchases have been made, consisting, as they mainly do, of scenery and antiquities. "I cannot," I have said, "make the Tour of the Coast, but I may have Daniell's, and Turner and Cooke's most beautiful *views* of the aspects of those maritime objects and scenes; which views, besides, may be beheld by fifty other persons in succession, and will retain their full value even after a thousand people may have seen them." And so of other fine representative

works. But many of the fine works in this den, such as Humboldt's South America, Hamilton's Campi Phlegræi (which you saw), Choiseul's Greece, &c., &c., &c., are representative of scenes altogether beyond the reach of actual inspection, but scenes of high interest, and about which all cultivated men are talking. *If* those scenes are among the most striking and interesting on earth, worth remote and hazardous journeys (for those who can afford it) to *see*, it is a thing of no small value for a man to have at command, for fixing their images in his own mind, and the minds of all cultivated persons around him, fine, and confessedly faithful delineations of them. Why, what sort of deposition would it be as to the quality, for instance, of your George's opening mind, if he will not for life be the better, in point of clear conception of volcanoes and their accessories, for having seen Hamilton's admirable views of such objects? I know that to *me* such a thing happening in my boyhood would have been of value to this hour. I repeat that such auxiliaries give the means of forming clear ideas of many things of which no descriptions *can give* clear ideas. I repeat, too, the assertion of the great value of such imagery, thrown into the imagination of a man of any genius, for the purposes of such illustration, as it is of great advantage for a preacher, or any other instructor, to be able spontaneously to mingle in his discourse.

Again, you speak of this expense, just as if it were the *absolute alienation* and *consumption* of so much property; whereas it is obviously only the loss of the *interest*; and *that* loss to be set against all the good which I am alleging. Now, if I had been in the habit, during a number of years past, of expending, in the absolute sense, just *so much as this interest*, in journeys to see remarkable things, with a trifling addition of the ordinary matters of polished life, &c., &c., I do believe that nobody would ever have thought of calling it extravagance.

. . . . I am tempted to say, (rather *ad hominem*) that you have always appeared to me much less sensible than is almost claimed in each case of a highly cultivated mind, to the aspects of beauty and magnificence in *real Nature*, which such works are meant to represent; and just so

much of defect have you suffered in the qualifications of an orator.

This is somewhat more than enough to have said on the subject; nor is all this meant as a retraction of my commencing admission of excess in this indulgence of taste; nor of denial that I have many a time been indignant at the thought of the heavy bill from Paternoster-row, when occasions have occurred on which I should have been glad to have been able to contribute to some valuable purpose and deserving object four half guineas instead of one.

Methinks it should not be one of the worst indications as to the effect of these luxuries, that I am thus trying with all my might to get possession of an easily readable copy of the works of John Howe. But, indeed, that very John Puritan Howe (shame on him for railing for ever at this so picturesque a planet) was exceedingly delighted with the scenery and antiquities of Italy, whither he travelled when near my age; and, had his fortune been to live now, he would most certainly, if debarred that actual contemplation, have purchased a copy of *Campi Phlegraei*, and of Hakewell's exquisite *Picturesque Tour of Italy*, now publishing.

I end as I began, with Howe's Works; pray send word by the first opportunity to Thornbury to have the book packed and sent as aforesaid. It will be mere perversity to leave it there till any such remote time as you talk of—"next summer." By being soon here, it may before that time have done ever so much good service to me, and by me to other people. . . .

CV. TO JOHN SHEPPARD, ESQ.

[Relating to a Manuscript on War, 1819.]

Being willing to assure myself, that by this time the anxiety of domestic interest is so much remitted as to allow your partial return to literary concerns, I am vexed to have so long detained your MS., especially as it was not from any critical propensity, but merely for the pleasure of a re-inspection, that I had expressed a wish to see it

again. Nor do I feel any prompting to indulge in annotation. I do not see what, *upon your system*, you can materially mend or alter. I still question (as you will readily suppose without my saying it), whether the system does not approximate too near quakerism to be quite feasible, even if a few of the bodies politic of this wicked planet were better disposed than any of them is. But at any rate, the essay furnishes a great deal of new suggestion, argument, and illustrative detail, on a most important subject, which wants to be forced into discussion by all manner of means, and which *cannot* be *seriously* discussed without *some* advantage, especially in this season of half repentant collapse and nausea, after the fury and intoxication of war.

To such a public discussion, I think your performance will be a valuable contribution. . . . It is of little comparative consequence, that the reader does not coincide in a number of the subordinate points,—that he is dissentient in matters of *mode and degree*,—if he is drawn into accordance in the main substance of the principles,—if he is made to feel, that this whole business of war and glory *must* be transferred from the jurisdiction of the statesman's creed and morality to that of the Christian, and finds, that after it is so transferred, there is an assignable form of theory and duty marked out to him, much short of quakerism, which he is invincibly compelled to regard as absurd.

The Peace Society has quite paralysed itself, for any extensive utility, by the adoption of the idle non-resistance notion. It may be presumed that many minds, abhorring the war-madness, but yet totally unable to accord with the Quakers, as deeming their notions a dereliction of common sense, will be gratified to find, *between* the extremes, something which they can substantially approve, however much they may consider some of the detail as matter for re-discussion. I think the work cannot fail to do some good; at the same time you are most perfectly aware, how unstatesmanlike, how unheroic, how unpoetic, and all that, its doctrines, and scruples, and limitations, will look, to such readers as the present age has peculiarly tended to form, and the nominal Christianity of the nation has very little served to correct.

CVI. TO JOHN SHEPPARD, ESQ.

[On the decease of Mrs. S.]

January 21, 1820.

MY DEAR SIR,—When I last left your house, after a visit exceedingly interesting to me, I ventured to hope that I should yet again see your amiable associate, and under happier circumstances of amended health to her, and alleviated anxiety to you. In such a judgment as could be formed, on so brief and transient an acquaintance, she appeared to me well adapted to engage and return the tenderest affection; and I should have congratulated your union, *if* I could have learnt that the anticipations of those best qualified to judge were in favour of a full restoration of her health. This pleasure was denied me, but yet I did not feel in her company the omens, that this my first interview with her was also to be the last. It would have been melancholy to have received her extremely kind attentions with such a presentiment. I subsequently heard of alternations which must have caused you a most painful, habitual apprehensiveness; but the latest accounts, before I went on a long excursion to the south, seemed to authorize a pleasing hope; so that I heard, at length, the intelligence of the fatal event with a degree of surprise; and it is even still difficult for me to realize the truth, that the person, whose *only* image, in my mind, bears the bloom of youth and the living expression of intelligence and kindness, is now laid cold and silent in the dust.

But, indeed, it is not *she* that is laid there; and if, in your indulgence of pensive thought, you follow her *thither*, but so often in proportion to the frequency of the ascent to follow her to another region, as that dead form is less the essential being of your departed friend than her happy spirit is—what a grand predominance you will have of the bright over the gloomy contemplations! It is true, that affection cannot consent to any disparagement of even the dead form of the beloved object; it will hover tenderly over its bed in the dust: well, but let faith be there too; and then even *there* also the contemplation becomes bright on hearing Him that has the keys of death say, “I will raise it up at the last day.”

It is delightful that you can dwell with decided assurance on the piety of your departed associate. You can thus regard her as having passed beyond the very last of the pains and sorrows appointed to her existence by her Creator, as looking back on them *all*, and having entered on an eternity of unmingled joy; as having completed a short education for a higher sphere and a nobler society; as having attained since she was your companion, and by the act of ceasing to be so, *that* in comparison with which the whole sublunary world is a trifle; as having left your abode because her presence was required among the blessed and exalted servants of the supreme Lord in heaven.

CVII. TO JOHN EASTHOPE, ESQ.

Downend, April 27, 1820.

MY DEAR SIR,—I cannot express to you with how much mortification it is this time my ill fortune to write to you.

At this tedious, heavy job, which has occupied me so long, I have been doing my best for a number of weeks past, with a confidence entertained till within the last seven or eight days, that I could force it to a conclusion by the end of this month. But within this last number of days (within about the time since I wrote to Mr. Stokes) I have found it perfectly impossible, with every other stimulus to impel me, and the strong additional one of anticipating to meet him at your house,—absolutely impossible to make any thing like such progress, or half such progress, as I had promised myself. That assurance to myself was made, not on a reckoning of more diligence, for I was already keeping hard at it,—but in the expectation that I should find less to alter in the last portion of the job. But since that time I have found the obstructions seem to grow still more obstinate than before; it has been literally marching by the means of cutting my way through an entangled thicket. I have been confounded to find how much absolutely *must* be altered in almost every

page; partly to make the general drift direct and obvious, partly in making the sentences individually clear and intelligible, partly in making the relation and junctures of the thoughts more correct and strict, partly in compressing the language,—and I might say, partly many things more. All these matters of process I have found on my hands at once, in paragraph after paragraph,—with only here and there, very rarely, a bit of clear ground of the extent of two or three sentences. I have fretted and wondered;—but this was of no use; there was nothing for it but to *work*. It would not do to say, it shall even go as it is. I knew the captiousness of readers, and the spite of critics too well for that. And for the thing itself, independently of those considerations, it was desirable not to let any thing go defective and wrong, if it were possible to set it right; which I never despair of being able to effect in the long run, though at first I cannot at all see nor guess how. I have also wished to do the thing as nearly as possible in a manner to need no alterations in case of another edition. It is very unfair to the purchasers of the first, not to make a diligent effort to secure this point. In that respect, though not intentionally at the time, I sinned very deeply in my first job of book-making; and was self-admonished to be very careful to avoid the same transgression in any future instance.

. . . . You are very kind in assuring me a quiet room for shop-work at Finchley;—but really it would be altogether out of the question to pretend to perform the inevitable task any where but on the shop-board in this garret, where I keep at it the whole substance of the day. It would be in contravention to the whole attractions of sociality and friendship, and the whole object of my visiting London, to spend much time there in such business. An hour or two of the morning would be all that could go to it, and that is precisely the part of the day in which I am always the least up to the working pitch. . . .

CVIII. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Downend, 1821.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—A packet to the printer may convey a few lines *not* addressed to the *public*,—that monster of a reader to which the author is willing to attribute some hundred thousand eyes. But I have not time to say much, for I do not know that I have ever been much harder tasked. A great tardiness of the press has thus far been a real advantage to me, or at least to the job in hand. With the first third part, or so, of the Essay now reprinting, I was never any thing near satisfied,—any more than, it seems, the readers are. It was begun (on the mere force of a determination to do something at any rate) in a dreary season of the year, which always has a malignant influence on my mental faculties; and prosecuted a great way on under the notion of making it only a long *discourse*. For more than two months past I have been applying quite my whole strength to make it what I can be content for it to remain, without any future alteration. And never was labour more truly in vain, if I have not *very greatly* improved this first third part: but indeed I know I *have* greatly mended it. As it now stands, it is more than half a *re-composition*; and, as all the alterations and additions were to be adjusted constantly into the old train of the composition, the labour has probably been more than would have been required to write, independently, as much as the whole. Many of the ideas have been more clearly expressed, the *sequence* has been, in various instances, made more obvious, and here and there a sparkle has been struck even from the cold opaque flint of *winter*, or the *more* cold and opaque substance of the subject. The quantity added will probably make 120 pages of the first edition, run to as much as 150 or 160 of the new. But the language has been compressed, while the topics have been dilated. The job, in short, has been so worked, that I shall now feel a *most perfect immovable* assurance that any further complaints of *obscurity, involvement, &c., &c.*, will be but proofs of the reader's want either of attention or capacity. I wish to believe that in the further progress I shall not find any great degree of

correction necessary; and besides the more popular and stimulant quality of the topics will more easily obtain an excuse for a less finished composition. Nor can *time* be allowed for much of this slow labour; for I shall be very desirous not to delay the printing.

Holdsworth sent me the *British Review*, in which, in the terms "exquisite precision of language," I fancy I see a recognition (and the only one I ever have seen or heard) of that which I consider as the advantageous peculiarity of my diction; namely, if I may use such a phrase, its *verity* to the ideas,—its being composed of words and constructions merely and directly fitted to the thoughts, with a perfect disregard of any general model, and a rejection of all the set and artificial formalities of phraseology in use even among good writers: I may add, a special truth and consistency in all language *involving figure*.—If you are beginning to say, "Let another praise thee, and not thyself," I may ask whether it should not be an excepted case where that "other" has not sense to see any thing in me to praise. Quite enough, however, of the subject.

CIX. TO THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES.

Downend, April 27, 1821.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Mr. Holdsworth has detached and sent to me the half of a letter to him from you, relative to the poor "book," which, it seems, after all the care and toil expended upon it, is still obnoxious to so many inculpations. . . .

An habitual, an historical, I do invincibly nauseate and abhor. It infallibly produces the babyish pronunciation *an istorical, an abitual*. And it is the most palpable violation of consistency, since nothing could look and sound more foolishly than *an istory, an abit*. I care not what authority there may be in the case; the thing is on the face of it absurd.

"*A vast deal too*," &c., is certainly "a good deal colloquial." There are a number of things in the volume of the same class; and they were deliberately (and not inadver-

tently) admitted, from a detestation of a stately, formal, measured, *high-level* sort of style, like that of Robertson or Blair. Let any one observe how often this sort of phrases occurs in the prose works of Dryden, whose style is perhaps the best in our language,—except in some points of mere grammatical correctness, to which the times he wrote in had not quite attained. This very construction that I am here falling into—"the times he wrote *in*," is one of the kind of things which you would find him continually using. And nothing can be more tiresome and odious than the perpetual of *which* and *in which*, for the purpose of avoiding the occurrence of the preposition at the end of a clause or sentence. Away with this stiff, pedantic formality! Accordingly I have here and there, ended a sentence, or member of a sentence, with a preposition. In the very best *talking* such things would be freely admitted, and the careful, systematic avoidance of them would appear a foolish affectation. While noting such matters, I must insist on your observing and acknowledging one point in which I excel my contemporaries. I give greater competence and power to the *verb* and *participle*; making them often express the sense completely, where, according to the ordinary modes of writing, a botheration of two or three little additional words would have been brought in. . . .

As to punctuation, considered generally, let me assure you that there is not, and there cannot be, any decided and practically available canon. If you would attempt to follow strictly an *intellectual* rule, you would only make your page almost impossible to be read; for *that* would require you sometimes to divide one single line into several bits, and then not to admit one stop in four, five, or six lines together. After a very few rules obviously dictated by the sense, there is no further guide for you than *to consider what pauses a person reading aloud will want, to help him conveniently through the sentence*. As to the comma preceding, and at the end of the *parenthesis*, I have adhered to that singularity, if it is such, for no other material reason than simply because I fell into this mode without much thinking about it, in the early part of the volume. At the same time, it does appear to me to be a proper mode, for the plain reason that a reader aloud, or a speaker, actually does and must

make a pause at the beginning and end of a parenthesis. But perhaps you will say, that the graphical mark of a parenthesis is considered as being itself the mark for a *pause*, as well as the mark for a distinct thought. If that be the truth, and a settled point, my practice is certainly wrong.

In one expression you seem to impute "numerous obscurities" to the composition, that is, to the meaning. It would be foolish to assume that there are really *none*, in a book of which so large a proportion consists of reflections, sentiments, and generalities, many of them of a nature remote from the obviousness of common-place; but I must keep firmly to my text, that if the reader thinks the obscurities are "numerous," it is very much his own fault.

Very great pains have been taken with the "Discourse" part of the book; and I am disposed to account the last paragraph in the volume about the most successful sample of amendment in the whole of it. That paragraph had not from the first satisfied me. The object was, to pass from that particular topic, from the one specific "form" of evil (the paganism of the East) to make the peroration the more solemn, the more applicable to *duty in general*, and to every one's duty, and also the more correspondent to the comprehensive view of moral evil at the beginning of the Discourse, by directing the concluding thoughts to the great *general* view of the conflict against sin. This was not, I always felt, successfully done in the original form. The transition was abrupt; and some of the first sentences of the passage, though they had the right *material*, did not develop it clearly. But how many hours of the utmost effort of my mind it cost to put the paragraph into its present form! What an effort to reduce the wide, and remote, and shadowy, element of the thought to what, I am willing to believe, is now a definite expression!*

* FIRST EDITION.

"My brethren, against this prodigious form, and against the whole dreadful power, of evil, it is our vocation to be engaged in the war. It were in vain to wish to escape from the condition of our place in

THIRD EDITION.

"For us, and our period of time, there is not only this one grand domination of moral evil, standing in hideous tyranny over a large portion of our world; in many forms of more immediate invasion

In this same Discourse my veneration for my old master's authority has suppressed *two* anti-cleric clauses; *one* in the enumeration of the classes in which there were found the

the universe of God. Amidst the darkness that veils from us the state of that vast empire, we would willingly be persuaded that this our world may be the only region, (excepting that of penal justice), where the cause of evil is permitted to maintain a contest. Here perhaps may be almost its last encampment, where its prolonged power of hostility may be suffered, in order to give a protracted display of the manner of its destruction. Here our lot is cast, on a ground so awfully pre-occupied; a calamitous distinction! but yet a sublime one, if thus we may render to the eternal King a service in which better tribes of his creatures may not share; and if thus we may be trained, through devotion and conformity to the celestial Chief in this warfare, to the final attainment of what he has promised, in so many illustrious forms, to him that overcometh. We shall soon leave the region where so much is in rebellion against our God. We shall go where all that pass from our world must present themselves as from battle, or be denied to mingle in the eternal joys and triumphs of the conquerors."—pp. 131, 132.

of ourselves, that worst enemy maintains a powerful and dreadful presence. We require to be kept in a habitual and alarming sense of the fact, that the one thing is the creation which surpasses all others as an object for hatred, is here amidst us, and all around, in many diversities of malignant existence, and with all of them it is our vocation to be at enmity and war. It were in vain to seek to escape from the condition of our place in the dominions of God. A mind of wandering and melancholy thought, impatient of the grievous realities of our state, may at some moments almost breathe the wish that we had been a different order of beings, in another dwelling-place than this, and appointed on a different service to the Almighty. In vain! Here still we are, to pass the first part of our existence in a world, where it is impossible to be at peace, because there has come into it a mortal enemy to all that live in it. Darkness and silence over the universe deny us all knowledge of the inhabitants of its innumerable worlds; but we would willingly believe that this may be the only region, (except that of penal justice), where the cause of evil is permitted to maintain a contest. Here perhaps may be almost its last encampment, where its prolonged power of hostility may be suffered, in order to give a protracted display of the manner of its appointed destruction. Here our lot is cast, on a ground so awfully pre-occupied,—a calamitous distinction! but yet a sublime one, if thus we may render to the eternal King a service of a more arduous kind than it is possible

most virulent enemies of the project for converting the Hindoos; and *one* where, in a mock supposition of a crusade of officers, merchants, &c., against the Hindoo superstition, "prelates" were put at the head, or at the tail of the expedition. This should be somewhat of a set-off against the story of the *bull-baiting*.*

Several sentences which your marginal marks had pointed to as capable of correction, remain as they were. I perceived the defects clearly enough, but I was at last pressed for time, (by the printer, whom I had at your direction be-laboured), was become exceedingly jaded by long exertion, and did not see how to mend the faults, (consistently with the compression and condensation which I have uniformly laboured to preserve), without spending some hours a-piece on each of those sentences. It is amazing what trouble it is to re-construct, in an amended form, a single sentence, when it includes several ideas, when you have to take care of the juncture with what precedes and follows, and when you are resolved it shall be but one sentence, in whatever form it may be put.

Reverting to your "authority," it would be little less formidable to me than any exertion of that of the Grand Turk, if it could be made peremptory and absolute in the injunction conveyed in the last lines of your note (to Holdsworth), viz., "to project *another book* forthwith." Some time must pass before *any* authority can bring me

to the inhabitants of any other world than this to render him; and if thus we may be trained, through devotion and conformity to the celestial Chief in this warfare, to the final attainment of what he has promised, in so many illustrious forms, to him that overcometh. We shall soon leave the region where so much is in rebellion against our God. But we shall go where all that pass from our world must present themselves as from battle, or be denied to mingle in the eternal joys and triumphs of the conquerors."—pp. 508—510.

* *Evils of Popular Ignorance*, third edit. p. 102; edit. 1845, p. 79.

into this hard service again. During a life which, I acknowledge with regret, and often with remorse, has been on the whole a very indolent one, I have never before made a mental exertion that has at all sensibly affected my health; but this last has done so. The confinement has been almost complete; and the continuance of the secluded exercise has been the greater from the circumstance, that the excessively frail and delicate state of my excellent wife's health, put her in the autumn under the most peremptory interdiction of the medical folk to venture, even for an hour, into this miserably cold house. The attempt to pass a winter in it would, I have no manner of doubt, have been fatal. She has accordingly not been within its walls this nine or ten months, nor will venture to come within them for some weeks to come, nor probably to go out of doors at Overn, where she has been through the winter, in a house which makes absolutely a quite different climate from what it is in this. We shall leave this at all events at Michaelmas, without, as yet, having any decided prospect where to go next;—probably somewhere nearer to the city. This deprivation of domestic society, in which a number of the hours of the day used to be employed, in a much easier manner than the garret-den requires, has for the last half year consigned nearly the whole of my time to this same garret. And the very sensible physical bad effects require that I should for some time run loose. I am going about a week hence to spend a week or two at Worcester, amidst a deluge of vernal beauty.

. . . . I *must* endeavour (and I implore divine influence and assistance both to *endeavour*, and to endeavour with some *effect*) to do what little I can for God and religion in the latter part of my life. It is with deep regret that in this reference I often review its general course hitherto. In this regret I often congratulate *you*, in my thoughts, on having employed the very long series of years since we were associates at Bristol, so very much in the manner that you would be grateful to Heaven for having been led to employ them in, if you were now expecting an immediate summons to leave the world.

In concluding I would request you, my old, and dear, and invariably, and unalterably respected friend, to accept

my grateful acknowledgments for the interest you take in what I am doing, or may have done. Believe me *never* to have been unobservant or insensible of this, however seldom I may have *expressed* such feelings as I am doing now. I perfectly know that (after my wife) there is no mortal who will, with respect to this book, for instance, take a tenth part of the friendly and prolonged interest that you do.

As to that iniquitous sentence in the Discourse,* after all, it would be foolish to account it so precious a jewel that not for the world should it be left out, *if* any decided good were to be gained by its exclusion. But in the first place, the most of any harm it *could* do me has been done already. Secundo, its omission (so far as it can be supposed so slight a circumstance would attract any one's notice) would look like an acknowledgment of the author that he had done wrong, which, in this case, would be a most false impression; or supposing it regarded as a *time-serving* omission, you know well in what manner Dr. Paley's omission, in later editions of his *Moral Philosophy*, of the sentence, "The divine right of kings is the divine right of constables,"† was regarded by honest men, and indeed by those who had no honesty to be offended. Tertio, the erasure (still on the supposition that such a circumstance could attract any notice) would give the bigoted traducer licence to say, in the *absence* of the clause or sentence, that there had been in that place a most scandalous and malicious libel. The best way therefore will be, I think, to let the sentence stand as it is, and put a few lines of a note at the bottom, expressing in slight terms that the writer has been told that it has displeased some readers, but he

* "The administration of the funds for the ceremonial and abominations of idolatry, has been, to a very great extent, taken under the authority and care of the reigning power, composed of persons zealous, on this nearer side of a certain extent of water, for the established Christian religion; which establishment has also been recently extended to that further side,—with what effect toward exploding, or even modifying, this very marvellous policy, or whether deemed to be perfectly harmonious with it, we must wait to be informed."—*Missionary Discourse*, p. 43; third edit. p. 411.

† "A constable, therefore, no less than a king, acts by a divine commission, and possesses an indefensible right."—*Hume's Essays*, vol. i. p. 466, Essay xii.

should have been glad to know why;—and then just putting and leaving the case:—The government do two distinct things in India; they formally support and administer many of the idolatrous institutions, and they appoint there a Christian established church;—*do* they, or do they *not*, deem these two measures in harmony? If they do *not*, what is to be thought of such conduct? if they *do*, where is the wrong of the writer's *surmising* that they do?

OX. TO THE REV. JOHN FAWCETT.

Downend, April 30, 1821.

MY DEAR FRIEND, . . . I hope you will give some credit when I say that I did sincerely intend to answer, with little delay, your former letter. And also, you will understand how an almost invincible indisposition to writing of *every* kind may be augmented in the particular instance, when we are sensible we cannot say that which would exactly please those to whom we write. I am alluding to the project of a monument to my revered old tutor. I will acknowledge that I have progressively acquired an aversion to all honorary monuments—excepting such as, remaining from very ancient times, are interesting to taste and imagination just in the character of antiquities. As to such as are erected now, they are useless if the persons to whom they are raised would be remembered without them; and they are useless if those persons would *not* be remembered without them.

If a man has left memorials of himself in valuable works, of any kind, literary or otherwise, which will engage attention and esteem long after he is departed, an inscribed and figured piece of stone (generally, besides, ill done as a matter of art) seems an idle superfluity. If he has *not* left such memorials, the monument will be of no use to his name, in future times. For if the *man* is unknown, the monument is merely a thing standing by itself, and does not bring the spectator into any sort of recognition of him—even supposing the spectator to believe the laudatory testimony inscribed upon it. But the worst of the matter

is, that he will not feel the slightest confidence in the truth of such testimony. 'It may be true,' he will say, 'but the contrary is quite as probable.' Nothing is more notorious than the utter unworthiness of faith, which, as a *general* fact, is chargeable on monumental tributes. It is *so* notorious, that any particular monument which may bear a *true* testimony, will fall hereafter under the same incredulity, unless it is verified by other known and convincing memorials;—and if there *be* such memorials, then the monument is superfluous.

I recollect that just about the time (perhaps a week before) that I received your letter on this subject, I happened, in a place of worship, to see a recently erected monument to a worthy minister who has been dead between twenty and thirty years. The greater number of the lines and epithets were appropriate, but there was *one*, of a very prominent nature, which I *knew* to be totally false;—false, not only in the sense that *that* was not the truth, but that a contrary expression would have been the truth. This marble, however, may remain probably as long as the excellent wall in which it is fixed, to be sometimes carelessly glanced at, by some individual in the congregation, knowing nothing of the man whose name is so recorded, and perhaps transiently, and with perfect indifference, thinking and saying within himself,—“I wonder whether, if the truth could be known, he was any such man as there described.”

. . . . Last autumn, after an interval of perhaps *fourteen* years! I saw for a short time our highly estimable old friend, Mr. Greaves, and his domestic associates; from whom I received a great deal of information about you, and the persons and circumstances of a neighbourhood to which I have been, almost an age of man, a stranger. . . .

OXI. TO JOHN SHEPPARD, ESQ.

1821.

. . . . If I were to spend the remainder of the week in social gratification at F—, I should be little prepared

even for *this*;—yet for this I should not so much mind, in a small place one is accustomed to, and among a small assemblage of old friends, one could say something or other to the purpose, and should not care much about the *quo modo*. But the two ensuing days would really be, *for me*, so miserably slow as I am in putting together my intellectual materials, utterly insufficient for a fair preparation for the occasion of the next week. And besides, I find a languid tone of health, into which I have latterly fallen, very seriously and injuriously affected by a forced and severe mental exertion. I have never recovered from the effect of the five or six months of iron bondage and labour in *new working* the *book business* for the second edition, last winter.

These sermons for *institutions*, &c., are a miserable sort of work for me, and I mean never to do any more of it. I am always quite certain I should have no “liberty,” as we of this profession name it, if I should venture *extemporaneously* in large places to which one is totally unaccustomed. And then, as I have absolutely *no memory* at all, my premeditations are totally useless to me, unless, as I go on, I secure them *in writing*. Therefore, for these occasions, I am obliged to write nearly half as much as what is to be said. The consequence is most wretched; for unless I have a *long time*, after this writing is done, to read many times over the said indited sentences and hints, so as to have some little command of them beyond the immediate reach of my eye, I am hampered and stiffened in the delivery, having neither *certainty* of reading, nor the *ease* of speaking.

OXII. TO THE REV. JOHN FAWCETT.

Downend, September 22, 1821.

. . . . I suppose all the prominent circumstances (of a local nature) about *your* residence remain much as they were so many—many years since. I retain in my mind a lively picture of it, though less vivid and complete than of Brearley Hall, and the house, gardens, &c., at Foot. Those are the places of which I have the most of that kind of

recollection which poets are so fond of describing. Subsequently to my several years' sojourn in those scenes, and in the society of the few coevals for whom I grew to feel a deep and unalterable regard (I need not say I chiefly mean yourself, Mr. Greaves, and your estimable sister),—subsequently to that season, I seem to have retained but little capacity for acquiring interesting associations with places. Not, I hope, defective in grateful recollection of the kindness experienced from individuals in *every* place where my lot has been cast for a while, I yet feel but little of any thing partaking of a romantic sentiment in going back in imagination, to one, or another, of the local stages, if it may be so expressed, of thirty years of unsettled life. Nor can this appear strange, when I may fairly say, with respect to every place where a considerable space of time has been passed, that my habitual wish has been—to leave it. As to any one of them, I should have revolted at the idea (supposing some voice, believed oracular, had pronounced it), that I should remain there the whole of this short life. As to the greater number of the places of sojourn, I should have much chagrined at such an oracle pronouncing at the commencement of the residence, that I should stay as long as in fact I did stay. Nevertheless I always dread, when it comes to the point, the trouble of a removal,—regret to leave some small number of persons in the place, and always extremely dislike at first any new situation. There may be a great deal of perversity of feeling in all this; and I cannot be unaware of its too probably involving a serious reproach,—namely that of being too little intent on serving, in each, in any, in every situation, the supreme Master, and doing every practical good to fellow-mortals. At the same time it will sometimes appear to my fancy as if such an unsettled course were more in analogy with the condition of this life as a transient sojourn—as a pilgrimage to another world. Well, whether in a stationary or more wandering way of life, we shall at no very distant period attain the final term. Within this week I have completed my fifty-first year; and I believe that you have attained the same age, or perhaps a year or two beyond me. It is sometimes only through the absolute force of dates, that I can believe I have advanced so far toward old age. But (should life be protracted) it

will not be long before other mementos than those of mere chronology will powerfully press upon us. Indeed, in the article of *sight* (so important especially to a person whose business is among books and writing), I am of late receiving strong admonition every day and hour.—Let us commit all to Him who has been our great benefactor and guardian hitherto, and pray that the latter part of our life, short as it will probably be in comparison with the portion which is past, may be, in the most important respects, far the best of it all,—that our descendants may see happier times in this world, and that they and we may all at length meet in an infinitely better. I am glad to believe that you have cause for pleasing anticipations in regard to your family; while your pensive recollections of *one*, no longer seen among them, must be mingled often with inexpressible delight.

.... As a monument *was* to be raised to my venerable tutor, I am glad it has been done by a *real artist*. The inscription, in its final form, appears to be altered for the better.—Had I written immediately after reading your letter, I should have had a number of things to say in comment on your observations on the use of monuments. With respect to Westminster Abbey, especially, I recollect that I was to have said that, though I have gone to the expense of a most admirable graphical work respecting it, it would at any time be a great luxury to me to accompany a few athletic men with pole-axes, to be most vigorously wielded, with just here and there an omission, in a process which I will leave to your imagination. With the here and there excepted instance, what do we see exhibited in memorial there, but the names and insignia of beings who were a nuisance and a pest upon the earth? You quote Nelson's speech with a flattering change of the words;—it was (as recorded) "*A peerage or Westminster Abbey*," an expression which I have always recollected as one of the most remarkable displays ever made of a contemptible littleness of passion and purpose in what is called a great man. . . . I am pleased to have your testimony, that the book I published some time since is materially improved in the second edition. Had this not been perceptible, the case would have been one of the most deplorable instances of labour lost.

CXIII. TO THE REV. JOSIAH HILL.*

Stapleton, November, 1822.

.... Even your *vanity* will hardly be competent to imagine how much I have felt the loss of your near neighbourhood. Going into Bristol, or the thought of doing it (I mean for an hour or a day, not for residence), is now quite a different thing, and I do it much less frequently. With all due regard for my friends there (and they are very worthy ones), I must confess that the *special* point of attraction is gone; and the grievance is, that there is no hope of its being there again. My maledictions have not been slight, nor seldom repeated, upon that Methodist system of yours, which will let nothing stay in a place that one would most wish to keep there. My good wife most cordially says Amen, to these imprecations,—till we recollect that this is doubtless a part of the system tending very powerfully, on the whole, to its utility.

You allow me to believe that, as yet, Mrs. Hill feels no bad effects of the London atmosphere. And I cannot say that I much wish she should, since any change of station which that might cause at the end of the first year, would be little likely to bring her and you to any locality nearer Bristol. It might only take you to Scotland, or—nobody knows where.—On another account, however, I could certainly wish you compelled to change the situation, to one of less work, bustle, and interruption. For I think that project about Baxter is eminently worth prosecuting, and I take it to be quite certain that no such thing can be effectually done till you retire to a more quiet position. It will else probably never be accomplished at all; or if it should, it will be in a manner which will oblige you to

* Mr. Foster's acquaintance with Mr. Hill began about the year 1812, probably on the occasion of Mr. Hill's visiting his sister, who resided in the neighbourhood of Bourton. Twenty years later, Mr. F., in one of his letters, speaks of him as "a man of very great and rare excellence; pious, benevolent, intelligent, and of liberal spirit and sentiments, with large knowledge and experience of mankind." The letters addressed to him in these volumes, and selected from a much larger mass, sufficiently attest Mr. Foster's high estimate of his character, and the cordiality of their friendship. Mr. Hill survived Mr. F. only a few weeks.

cant a preface in the customary strain of—"The author is sensible the work is done in a very imperfect manner, far from fully satisfactory to himself; and he hopes the readers will allow him to apologize by pleading want of time, great variety of avocations, &c., &c., &c.,"—to which the readers might, in *this* case, very rightly reply, "And whose *fault* is it that you were in all this bustle? Is it any satisfaction to *us*, the purchasers and readers, that you preferred your temporary row of *popularity* to the benefit you might have afforded *us*, and those after us, by doing the thing in a much better manner?" I doubted whether you would have much success in the collection of the remainder of old Richard's works. Your career of cheap purchase, at least, is nearly at an end. You will have no more opportunities of establishing among dealers such a character as you left behind you among those in Bristol; namely, that of the hardest bargainer in Christendom. I dare say it would be very edifying to you to hear them make the comparison between you and—*somebody else*.

. But, too much of books. Next time you can afford leisure enough to fill a sheet, I shall hope to hear how you like the new situation in respect to its religious aspect, and its preaching services. I hope that at all events you will see proof that you are not labouring in vain with respect to the best cause, and its divine Master. For myself, I am earnestly wishing to be much more cordially and zealously devoted in this most important direction. I have engaged to preach every Sunday afternoon, for some indeterminate time, depending on circumstances, in a small meeting-house between here and Downend; to begin next Sunday.

CXIV. TO B. STOKES, ESQ.

Stapleton, February 26, 1823.

. Next opportunity I shall beg your acceptance of a copy of the new edition (just now about got through the press) of certain four essays—I should not think of offering you a thing of such worn-out interest, but just for

the reason that this edition has undergone positively the last revisal that I shall ever give it. It may stand on your shelf simply in the quiet character of being, in a small degree, a better book than any former copy. The several editions since the second have passed with perhaps hardly half a dozen corrections: this last cannot have received less than *a thousand*,—though I give not the slightest hint of any such thing, to displease any purchaser of former editions. Most of these tinkeringings are utterly trivial; but some half a hundred of them, or more, are reconstructions of sentences, and attempts (in many of the instances successful ones, I believe) to bring out the lazy or clumsy meaning more distinctly. In some of the instances it is not that the sentence itself, taken separately, is better said, but the modification is meant to cure some little matter of incongruity or dissonance with its neighbours, which I detected in a severe examination. There is but very little enlargement, not, probably, the amount of twenty pages.

From little matters to great—in what spirit do you at Worcester talk of the dreadful omens that are darkening over Europe?—the omens, it is too probable, of as awful a commotion as ever has convulsed it.—In what style do those famous Peace Society gentlemen talk of it? *What* do they say that the Spanish nation should do? But truly what signifies what they say? One does hope in Providence, that if *this* war is to rage, it will end in mightier prostrations of dominion than even Bonaparte accomplished, and of infinitely nobler tendency and result.

CLXV. TO B. STOKES, ESQ.

Near Haverfordwest, September 10, 1823.

. . . . I have been more than a fortnight in this quarter, the coast of St. Bride's Bay, where the sea is clear of all fresh-water modification, and the air is most pure and delightful since the fine weather set in. I expect some ten or twelve days more of it, having written to settle the omission of one of my appointed *lectures*, in order to pro-

long the time.* I must then return from utter idleness to hard work, with a sort of pleasure to withdraw from *necessary* idleness, but with intense aversion to *necessary* labour; this latter feeling, partly owing to constitutional indolence, and partly to the miserable effect which hard labour latterly has on my health, to which a single week, or a single day, of hard, mental exercise does sensible injury. And, unhappily, any mental labour is to me a hard business. It is always against the grain, and a business of dogged self-denial; especially any thing in the *composition* way. I honestly believe I have never, at any one time, written the amount of a single page (of course, not including *letters*) without a painfully repugnant sense of toil; such a sense of it as *always* far more than to overbalance

* "Do you honestly think that without any considerable awkwardness or *fuss* of explanation, the first appointment in the sequel of my lecture-services could be *rendered blank*? The case is this—that owing to rain every day, indisposition of some of the family in consequence of long and violent sea-sickness, and several other circumstances, I have been prevented, inevitably, from getting actually to the sea-side till this afternoon, (we are to go thither this evening.) To be back in Bristol against the 10th of September, I shall be reduced to the mere space of *one single week* at the sea, a very incompetent length of time to derive much benefit, on the score of health, from the situation,—a circumstance which I had no cause to anticipate at the time I left Bristol. . . . If one week will be of any service, the addition of towards a fortnight more would obviously be a great amendment of the matter. Longer than so I should not stay, though there were no lecture engagement in the case. Nevertheless, I will cut off the time at the end of next week, or the beginning of the following, and be at the accustomed post, if Dr. R. and you shall judge that the non-fulfilment of this one instance of the settled appointment would be really an impropriety. My dear sir, I may surely be confident, that you will not misapprehend this language. It is not, you will give me credit for it, that I am attaching any manner of *importance to the lecture itself*—done or omitted. The thing is, whether the previous public notice of such omission, the explaining of the cause to the circle of friends, &c., &c., would not seem far *too much ado* about the matter; whether it would not be like making an idle *fuss* about health, and so forth. You will, I am sure, look at the case just as I am wanting you to look at it. I am sorry to have occasion to make such an application. Should the omission be thought allowable, you will not doubt my perfect readiness to perform the adjusted *number* of these services by a *lecture additional* after the close of the series and the year—if there shall be no resumption of these services for a following year. I may be allowed to take credit for not wishing to *filch* an exemption from any portion of the stipulated labour."—*Mr. Foster to the Editor; dated Haverfordwest, Aug. 29, 1823.*

any sense of pleasure; and such as, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, quite to annihilate any such feeling of pleasure. . . .

I should have been very happy to have been spending these two fine weeks in the friendly society of Worcester. But S., as I have said, urged, in the most peremptory professional terms, "the sea, the sea," from which I do calculate on returning considerably the better. There have, however, been no excursions or adventures; for in a boat one would have little but sickness; and horses, this being harvest time, are hardly to be procured. An excursion, however, is intended a day or two hence, to that very interesting locality, the city of St. David's, so striking by its antiquities, and a solemn character of desolation, both in the town itself and the natural scenery around it. *North Wales* remains always in my fancy as a matter of anticipation, for one of these days, if life be prolonged. It cannot be so fine an adventure, in some respects, the next time, as the former one, now so long since past. Will there be a new and specific interest from the circumstance that we shall then be so much older?—that we shall then have so many years less for looking on the scenes of this world?—that we shall then be so much nearer the period for passing into *another* world, to see what there is *there*? Such a consideration would most certainly excite a pensive sentiment; but, at the same time, an animated and sublime one, *if* we are but conscious of being, in proportion to this approximation, the better prepared for the great transition. Let us, my dear sir, apply ourselves most earnestly and assiduously to this great purpose. Now that I have reached the fifty-third year of life, I am very often admonished and reminded of the decline of life. The mere *time* is such an admonition; and the indifferent health of the last two or three years is a strong and constantly returning reinforcement of it. . . .

CXVI. TO THE REV. DR. RYLAND.

Stapleton, Saturday.

MY DEAR SIR,—You will very easily anticipate the true

character and object of this note—as a brief practical paraphrase of the good text, “*I pray thee have me excused,*”—(relatively to the Sunday after to-morrow,)—on many accounts. I feel a special unadaptedness to a task so entirely unaccustomed as that of preaching before,—and partly *to*—many hundred children, it being, at the same time, a kind of exhibition for the sake of their elders; it is a kind of mixture and contrast which confuses my faculties. Again, it is a thing perfectly evident from fact and experience that, though there might come a very few persons extra for the sake of hearing *me*, yet there is hardly any other preacher that would not assemble a fuller congregation.

Next—on my own account—the half a week’s very hard labour, which the service would at the least require, is very particularly and strongly called for (if I *can* force myself to so much exertion) by one or two long and unconscionably procrastinated tasks which I have been causing very considerable inconvenience and some loss in certain quarters by not performing, and which I have shrunk from, partly, it is too true, from mere repugnance to hard labour,—but partly from the oppressive effort of such labour, latterly, on my health, which I am afraid I shall henceforward be under the necessity of husbanding as a man within an inch of bankruptcy ought to husband his shillings. On this plea I honestly excused myself from helping brother Porter at Bath to-morrow—and which service, if I had engaged for it, I should in the event have been unable to render, from an extreme hoarseness which I have incurred from taking cold within these three days—and which untoward circumstance it is quite uncertain and doubtful whether I may be freed from by the end of next week. I am aware how liable I am to appear, to a workman so invincible as you are, to have magnified little things into great ones in this statement in plea of exemption. But in very truth, I do not magnify them beyond what they actually are to my own experience. Therefore, the good text, “*I pray thee have me excused.*”

I am, dear sir,

Yours with the greatest respect,
J. FOSTER.

CXVII. TO JOSEPH COTTLE, ESQ.

Tuesday Morning, 1823.

It will seem to you a little strange that I should send a letter to reach you within a few hours only of the time that I was to see you. And I am casting about to think of any adequate terms of apology in which I could introduce the letter as a substitute for myself.—I will just say the simple truth. My excellent wife has suffered, during the preceding two days, a succession of peculiarly severe head-aches, which, though now gone by, have left her in a state of great languor and prostration. She does not often experience this complaint in anything like the same degree; but when it does attack her, it always leaves for a while this consequence of extreme languor, which necessarily very much affects her *spirits*, as well as that physical strength which is at all times but feeble.

Now, for several weeks past, between visits, preaching engagements, and tasks to be done in seclusion at home, I have very rarely passed a single evening in her company. And there is no other company, *ever*, that she can have in this place—except that of the two children—at least, *hardly* ever. Just now her sister Cox is on a visit at a distance. This solitude naturally adds to the effect (it would in any case do so) of such a depression of spirits, as that which these violent head-aches have temporarily caused. And making the case my own, I cannot help feeling that I should feel it somewhat hard to be, just in that state, again left by the domestic associate the whole afternoon and evening, while that associate should go to be in great social interest elsewhere.—The case being so, my dear sir, will not you, and my excellent friends your sisters, candidly accept this as an apology for my saying, that I hope you will allow me to exchange the appointment for my having the pleasure of dining with you to-day, for an easy visit to take some of your tea one of the evenings toward the end of the week? —I will allow myself to feel assured that you will so far excuse me. . . .

CXVIII. TO THE REV. JOSIAH HILL.

Stapleton, Nov. 11, 1823.

. . . . When you write have the goodness to recite the *reserved* curious anecdotes about Irving. Wishing to think well of him (as one does on the whole), one is not exactly pleased with that story about the *betting*. Still, however, one can deem such a thing not incompatible with being honest and in earnest about religion. In a buoyant, dashing, daring, wild spirit, there may be many things not so incompatible, which would yet appear very strange and exceptionable to sedate persons, of nicely regulated feelings and habits.

. . . . In my last I intended to have mentioned that on and in the coach from Haverford, I met with a personage who signified, though in terms of some balancing and uncertainty, an intention to do the Methodists the honour of throwing his great force into their ranks.—He had walked forward and was taken up a mile or two on the road: and I heard the coachman's leering explanation to the guard, of who this personage might be; namely, a gentleman who had lately finished a two years' course in your jail, and was come out a flaming Christian and preacher. A further explanation was, that a companion, who had walked with him so far on the road, and there parted in most friendly style, was the very fellow that had just been tried and iniquitously acquitted at your assizes for plundering the miller. This apostle was in the inside of the coach,—and when I got in he was mighty forward, I thought, with his religious books and religious talk (I being a perfect stranger to him). I somehow betrayed a hint of knowing who the young fellow, his companion, was; and then it came out in curious self-display, who he himself was; and I might have read I know not how many authentic testimonials to his conversion, his reformed character; and I did hear his own account of his highly popular acceptance and efficacy as a *preacher*. The people crowded and wept to hear him. His imprisonment, he said, was from a cause that did him no dishonour; though, in other respects, he had, he said, been a wild fellow. His being in such friendly company with that acquitted thief, he accounted for on the

score of his having been of some signal spiritual use to that thief's father.—He *would* know to what religious class I might belong. Could I, even in such company, repress the vanity of saying, that my chief acquaintance in that part of the country was *with the Methodists*? He did them the honour to applaud them, and thought he should, after a little while, add himself to that noble class, evidently deeming that they ought and would make much of such an ally. He remained *in* the coach after I mounted the outside, and left it, if I remember, at Caermarthen. I well knew that shrewdness and discretion were, at this time, at the head of the Methodist Society at Haverford; and certainly wished that those qualities might not be put in abeyance in such a case. He may be a sincere convert (I should say might *then*, for, by this time, possibly, he is completely the *reverse*), but he certainly had no right notion of the ground on which a man of his previous conduct ought for some considerable time to stand.—The coachman and guard gaily agreed that he might probably make an excellent trade of his new calling. . . .

OXIX. TO THE REV. JOSIAH HILL.

Stapleton, Jan. 26, 1821.

. . . . I am much interested and pleased with your account of friend John. There truly needed no such ceremony about inducing me to send him a letter. But I am a most incompetent adviser in any thing about *literary* plans and pursuits. On other topics, of more general interest to a young man, I may have gained from experience, observation, and reflection, somewhat of wherewithal for counselling a new adventurer in life and the world. As to the question (for the next ensuing stage of his studies), between mathematics, and a still further occupation with the classics, it would, in my apprehension, turn very much on the estimate of the student's mental character. The mathematics, by all means, for a youth of excessive fancy, ardent sentiment, roving thought, and romantic propensity. To such an one, the sooner the better a process is applied for

regulating, cooling, methodizing, consolidating, the habits and operation of his mind.—But, on the other hand, supposing his imagination and sentiment not yet fully developed,—his perception of what is beautiful, graceful, or sublime, to be somewhat behind his attainments in knowledge and understanding,—his taste unmaturing,—then I should think the more advisable thing to be a longer, full addiction to the studies of ancient poetry and eloquence. One would be very desirous to expand, and warm, and *ignite*, (shall I say ?) and fertilize the faculties, before applying the process to condense, and square, and constrain, and harden them. You will probably not be at a loss to judge on which of the two sides of John's mental economy there is the greater need of the appropriate application. From so much as I have seen of it, I might be inclined to surmise (with the exception, indeed, of his political fervour), that it is more on the side of what is denominated *sentiment*, that he wants an addition ; and the enlargement of his imagination, the cultivation of his taste, and of the qualities akin to these, might be, for some time to come, the more desirable course. Mathematics, *too soon* and too much, might have the effect of hardening and maturing the mental fruit before it has received sap enough to swell it out to its full size. But in all this, do not consider me as taking on myself the office of adviser.

If friend James's health shall have attained a tolerable degree of firmness, it will doubtless be a very good thing for him also to go to Scotland. John's assistance and co-operation will be of the greatest use to him. And if it should happen to be that clever and hopeful fellow's peccadillo to be some trifle too self-sufficient, he will find this disposition sensibly checked by seeing something of a great number of other clever fellows, whose attainments it will require many a long laborious exertion to equal.—Young M., a youth of great acquirements (chiefly by his own mere exertion), and of great modesty into the bargain, who has been some weeks at home after his first term at Cambridge, says the most forcible impression made on him on going thither, was that of *his own insignificance*. . . .

CXX. TO MR. J. W. HILL.

Stapleton, Feb. 6, 1824.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND JOHN,—A letter some time since from Haverford gratified me much, among other things, by information about you; the pleasure you feel in your new and remote situation, your studies, and the favour you experience from Professor Sandford. In that letter it was added, that I might give some degree of pleasure, both to the Haverford friends and to yourself, by conveying my friendly remembrance to you in the shape of a letter. I was pleased at being told so, notwithstanding that letter-writing is in itself no favourite employment with me. . . . I have a very lively and pleasing remembrance of the great number of social hours spent, with the family all together on the hill at Bristol, and of our later talks, saunterings, and rambles, in St. Bride's Bay. It is curious, and almost strange, to think how differently we are now situated, in this great triangle—Western Wales, Glasgow, and Bristol. I often regret this prodigious *dislocation*. But it is the disposition made by Providence, and we have each and all our respective duties to perform, faithfully and diligently, where our lot is cast. I hope we shall all have to remember, both in future time and after all our time is ended, these various stations as scenes where we were not placed in vain; and where we acquired something, and performed something, of never-ending value, both to ourselves and others. I earnestly wish your health may continue uninjured and firm during your studious labours,—of your industry and great success in which there is not the smallest cause to doubt; any more than of the high advantage which you will hereafter, if Heaven prolong your life, reap from your attainments. Among us dissenters (and I confidently trust you will always remain faithful to the battalion, in spite of Mr. B.'s example), there is no one thing more urgently wanted (religion out of the question) than a class of vigorously disciplined young scholars, thoroughly accomplished in classical literature especially, and qualified to take a commanding station in the higher departments of education,—in seminaries and institutions of all kinds, and especially in those for the literary and intellectual discipline of young

preachers,—a greater, and still greater number of whom are continuing to be required, as religion and the dissenting interest are continuing to extend. And dissent, you may be sure, *will* continue to extend, in whatever proportion true religion and free thinking shall do so,—to the ultimate abolition of that antichristian nuisance, the established church. But we are hitherto sadly deficient in sound thorough literary and mental discipline,—both our preachers, and the respectable and partially cultivated portion of our body. In this view, it is with extreme gratification that I think of a few young men that I know or hear of, and yourself as one of those few, who are I hope rising up to improve our condition and respectability, in co-operation with others that will be gradually added to the honourable fraternity. The need and importance of such a class is every year becoming more sensibly felt, and every future year their value will be more justly and highly estimated.

I am not, in all this, *assuming* that you have as yet thought with any considerable definiteness of plans for your future life; and it is quite time enough yet. But I think it is not impertinent thus early and strongly to represent to you, of what high account, in one wide and most important department, such attainments will be, as you are now in the worthy progress of acquiring.—This is, indeed, holding up a prospect of *great labour*; but what are we in this world for, but to labour, to the utmost of our strength, in important service to God and mankind? It is in *another* world alone, and on no *nearer* ground, that we can expect to be happy, and illuminated, and exalted in virtue, *without* labour, in the painful and toilsome sense of that word.

Religious admonitions are too familiar to my young friend to need that I should dwell on them,—except with *specific* reference to influences and temptations from which your present situation may not be exempt. It is too well known that in the literary and scientific institutions and society of Scotland there is a very pervading spirit of scepticism and infidelity. I trust your mind will be most carefully guarded against this *mortal* contamination; as well as against all that moral laxity to which it leads,—and, indeed, from which it very chiefly originates. I hope in Heaven that your manhood will display a faithful and

practical devotion to that which, from your infancy, you have been instructed to be the highest concern of life,—and which very few are deluded and stupified enough at the *close* of life, not to acknowledge to have been so. How many at last so acknowledge it with grief and even despair!

CXXI. TO THE REV. JOSIAH HILL.

Stapleton, March 6, 1824.

. . . . The accident you heard of was three or four months since: it was slight, though it might have been serious. I was returning from one of the lectures with my sister-in-law, when, a little on this side the turnpike near Baptist Mills, some boy threw a squib or something of that kind across the road, just under the noses of the horses, which instantly started off with such impetuosity, that the reins broke in the man's hand. They took a sweep to the off-side of the road, so as to graze the carriage hard against the high wall, by which the carriage was much damaged, the windows broken, and a piece of the glass struck the side of my face, where a mark is made, that will always remain. The man threw himself from the box, with the design to catch hold of one of the horses,—but was instantly left in the road, and they galloped on about half a mile, till they were some way up the long ascent of the Downend road, when they slackened to a slow pace at last, by which time the man rode up, and got before their heads on some horse which he had seized at the door of an inn. There was happily nothing on the road, to be either met or passed. My companion was not hurt at all, and the cut which I received, though of some depth, got well in two or three weeks. It was an occasion for specially acknowledging the care of a merciful Providence.

. . . . A few days since at Strong's I gave half-a-crown, I *did*, I really did, for an old octavo of Wesley on *Original Sin*; and through about a hundred pages which I have read, he seems to me to talk very much to the purpose; but what on such an estimate of human nature he could do

with his Arminianism—his *sufficient* power in man—I cannot divine; perhaps he will make it all plain somewhere in the book, which I mean to read through, and perhaps more than once. . . .

XXXII. TO THE REV. JOSIAH HILL.

Stapleton, Sept. 1, 1824.

. . . . The consequence of long idleness is such that I am mortified and astonished to find what a difficulty I have even to *understand* any thing I attempt to read of a harder temper than friend Walter Scott's metaphysics. This very morning, in trying at a section of Lowman's "Rational of the Hebrew Ritual," I was obliged to go over the sentences again and again, before I seemed to obtain the smallest notion of what it was all about; and not being honestly able to ascribe the fault to the author, I was willing to divide the blame between myself, and the sluggish, sultry, soporific air and heat here. There is a prodigious difference of climate between here and St. Bride's Bay, unless, indeed you have by this time experienced a very great change even there. A glorious season, however, for the harvest, which a few more days will complete hereabouts.

Among innumerable things wrong about us, there has to-day been at Downend, one thing right—namely, a *baptizing*, of several persons, including a man of very great reading and research, brought up a churchman. There never was an instance, I believe, of more deliberate and conscientious conviction, followed out at the cost of an unmitigable hostility to be endured from his relatives, with whom his circumstances render it necessary for him at present to reside. A young clergyman, of the evangelical class, with whom he has been intimate, had nearly been betrayed into the same predicament, confessing explicitly that he felt ashamed, and galled in his conscience, in the act of sprinkling [infants], and calling it baptism; but, most opportunely and luckily, he has been saved from plunging into the water by the intervention of a young lady, of good fortune, and high church temperament.

CXXIII. TO THE REV. JOSIAH HILL.

1824.

. . . . It occurs to me after each time of seeing you, to wonder how silent you are about the "Life of Richard" [Baxter]. I suspect you are by degrees giving up the design, any further than the compilation for Edwards's edition of the Works. And to be sure, whenever one looks into one of his polemical things, one thinks you are right. I do not see how less than a great part of a diligent life could suffice to make out any tolerable scheme and history of his opinions and controversies. And something of that sort would seem to be required, in a grand, comprehensive, well digested, and final exhibition of his life and character. But, to say nothing of the length of time this would take, where can mortal patience be found to work out such a historical analysis? And indeed, after all, what would be the benefit of it? A boundless, endless maze and wilderness of debates, projectings, schemings and dreamings, about churches, and their constitutions and their government; about arrangements for union, and terms of communion;—the numberless polemical notices which he thought himself called upon to take of all the petty and spiteful cavillers of his time;—the hasty productions of an over-officious zeal to set every body right about every actual or possible thing;—the attenuated, and infinitely multiplex argumentations, in the manner of the schoolmen, about trivial niceties in theological doctrine;—and above all, the ever-renewed and fruitless toils to work out a *tertium quid* from the impossible combination of two opposite systems of theology;—what, I repeat, would be the use of attempting to find or make a biographical road through this vast chaos?

CXXIV. TO THE EDITOR.

[On a MS. Translation of Pascal's Thoughts.]

1824.

MY DEAR SIR,—I trust you will excuse the bold liberty I have taken, in making so many exceptions and sugges-

tions. I have done it as a kind of sample of the manner in which (*reviews* excepted) I have been accustomed to traverse my own matters of composition.

You will perceive, that I would sometimes adhere more exactly than you always do to the turn of expression in the original; but I cannot be at all sure, that a perfect master of both the languages, would not in some instances pronounce this punctilious and slavish. There is, however, so much of the *mind* of Pascal often shown in the very cast of his expression, that one would wish to keep as near it as possible. At the same time, there is here and there such a parsimony of words, and, we must even say, such an obscurity, as to make it indispensable for the translator to shape the sentence according to what he can *guess* of the meaning.

In many of the places which I have noted, you may see cause to retain your expressions as they stand, in preference to what I have ventured to suggest,—or to attempt some still different construction. Many such things are matters of individual taste. What is peculiarly to be avoided in translating Pascal, is, all lengthy formality of phraseology: he is an admirable example to the contrary—of a simple, direct *vital* manner of expression.

In any future portions, that you may wish me to see, I shall not trouble you with such frequent exceptions. Indeed, *self-indulgence* dictates to desist,—as I find that several whole days hardly suffice for this sort of examination of two or three sheets. I will only trouble you so far as to make, in passing, some slight note of indication where any thing strikes me as particularly deserving of another trial of your mind and hand.

Yours very truly,
J. F.

CXXV. TO THE REV. JOSIAH HILL.

Stapleton, Feb. 25, 1825.

.... I was pleased that your own acquaintance with Saunders, and Catherine's with his daughter, contributed to give an interest to what I wrote respecting the latter. My interference in her case did not involve a great deal of

what could strictly be called "painful." The warm regard entertained for each other by the preceptor and the pupil, and the pupil's candour, intelligence, and serious intentness on the great subject, imparted quite a prevailing character of pleasure to the office, though necessarily it was pleasure of a pensive quality. . . . To me this concern, and its departed object, will be an interesting remembrance as long as I live.

. . . . The late grand parliamentary debate,—did you take any considerable interest in that huge contest? It was the most athletic strife that has occurred for many years past, in that St. Stephen's prize-ring. We here read almost the entire of the four nights' debate, as given at vast length in the *Times* paper. We admired exceedingly the mighty power and promptitude of mind displayed by the great chiefs in the warfare. Plunkett's speech was a fine exhibition of large and commanding intellect; Tierney's, the happiest possible rally of keen exposure and satiric ridicule. For fierce, vengeful, and irresistible assault, Brougham, stands forth the foremost man, I take it, in all this world. It is exquisitely gratifying to see how his javelins fly at the time-servers and the scoundrels. . . .

CXXVI. TO THE EDITOR.

1825.

MY DEAR SIR,—If the alternative were to be hanged, I could make you no satisfactory answer. Be thankful that you are not in my shoes. "Work double tides!" I feel at this very hour so unwell that I cannot work at all; so that I have been forced to relinquish a subject that I had thought a little of for Thursday's lecture, and must have recourse to the expedient of vamping up an old sermon for the purpose.

I now feel that it will be totally impossible for me to do any thing at all, of any kind, for Pascal; any thing that could be completed within less than *three months*, at the least. I am not more sure that I am writing these lines, than that I should utterly sink under any attempt at forcing

myself to write at the rate of so much, or any thing near so much as *one printed page per day*. This is no pretence or evasion. I never write as much as one such page of composition, properly so called, without becoming faint and sickly. My knees have literally trembled under me all this day, in consequence of rather a hard effort during part of the preceding day. When I do *nothing* for a while, I, like a child, forget to anticipate how the case will be when I really shall endeavour to do something. And in such a season I innocently say, I hope to do so and so ; and thus I was betrayed to fancy I could do something for Pascal, perhaps by the time of *your* completion of the undertaking.* But when I *do* attempt any thing, then comes again the old consequence, and my wonder at myself that I could have been so thoughtless, so little taught by experience, as to expect and engage to do any thing. I deplore both my imbecility (of body and mind), and my folly in making any kind of engagements in forgetfulness of my past miserable experience. . . . It is the plain, unfortunate truth that I *cannot* write, otherwise than a very small paragraph or two, at long intervals ; that is, cannot without being made quite ill.

As to Doddridge, after throwing aside two or three several little lots of material, which, in succession, I had meant for that article, I am trying to do something in a different way ; and am doing most tamely and inefficiently. . . . I had better have proceeded with what I was at first, or at second, about ; for then it would have been done long since. But it is of no use even to reproach myself. . . .

CCXVII. TO THE REV. JOSIAH HILL.

April, 1825.

MY DEAR SIR, I am sometimes very much disposed to murmur, that the little I *can* do towards any sort of usefulness being entirely in the intellectual way, the

* The translation of Pascal's Thoughts, referred to in this and a preceding letter (p. 455), has since been published, with an Introductory Essay by Mr. Isaac Taylor.

doing it should be so slow, and irksome, and painful, and even physically injurious, an operation. Some of the workmen in the thinking-shop can do about their best with a great degree of facility and despatch; can bring thoughts and put them into sentences about twenty times as fast as I ever could. In my case, old *practice* has not given the smallest advantage in point of facility. Rather, I think of the two, it has left the business still more slow and laborious than even formerly; so that my aversion to the employment has continually increased. And yet something like a sense of duty to be trying at it has continued to haunt and disturb me. But advancing age, and invincible ill health (a health which suffers *peculiarly* under this kind of labour), certify me that I can never now accomplish much. I will console myself with hoping that what has been done, with any little more that I may be able to do, will not leave me altogether under the censure of having lived in vain.

Notwithstanding the fatiguing employment I have mentioned,* I was tempted, after I saw you last, to impose on myself a little extra task,—that of putting in the shape of a paragraph or two, for my next letter to your worship, the topic of our debate that evening in Mrs. F——’s parlour; not so much, however, on *your* account (you are, I verily believe, nearly of the same opinion), but to aid my own wretched memory, by collecting into a narrow space,—into a focus, as it were, the particulars constituting the argument. Partly from having, unfortunately, always declined the hardship of disciplining my thoughts to system and method, and partly from this miserable want of memory, the case is with me, that whenever I attempt to argue a point, I have always to cast about to think of something *at the time*,—always to begin anew, much as if I had never discussed the matter before. To be sure, if there be *any* question, for the disposal of which there are obvious and plentiful resources at hand any where, at any time, independently of such previous adjustment of the materials of argument, it is that respecting your notable Arminian tenet *a sufficient grace and power* (I suppose I may so express it), in possession of all men for their conversion.

* Essay to Doddridge’s Rise and Progress.

Yet I think, I will, one of these days, try to put in the fewest words, *the appeal to fact*. And then I shall have nothing to do next time, but to amuse myself in observing the manner in which you play and quirk about, in attempting to maintain a point of the Methodist creed which you do not believe, but dare not disown. . . .

CCXXVIII. TO THE REV. JOSIAH HILL.

Stapleton, June 10, 1825.

. . . . You may chance to have heard, or seen some newspaper notice, of Dr. Ryland's death. After several months of slow and gradual deterioration, he sank very rapidly during the last two or three weeks. He was sensible to the end; but was so oppressed by debility and laborious breathing during the last few days, that, to the regret of his friends, he was unable to hold any material communications with them. Most of what he said was in the form of pious ejaculation, mingled with the natural expressions of suffering. The funeral was very solemn in *effect* as well as show. The public exercise was shared by Hughes, Birt, and Roberts. Hall yielded to the "church's" solicitation to come to preach the funeral sermon last Sunday. It ended with a long and eloquent eulogium of Dr. R., conceived with great discrimination, and not much exaggerated. He has consented to publish it. Dr. R. was, indeed, a most admirable man in all sorts of goodness. You hope his "*creed* has been pardoned him." If it needed pardon, it was a sin; and I do not see how we are to hope for the pardon of *sin not repented of and renounced*. In this predicament was the guilt of Dr. R. as to his creed. I assure you he did not, he really did not, chant, by way of recantation, the pious and humble strain of one of the sweet singers of your Israel,—

"Take back my interest in the Lamb,
Unless the Saviour died for all."

. . . . I suppose you will be here a week at least, at the conference time. . . . I like you Methodists better, probably, than does any other so sterling a Calvinist.

CXXIX. TO THE EDITOR.

Stapleton, Oct. 1825.

.... Almost every time I have seen the old *enemy* in Clare Street, he has expressed his regret at the loss of you. In a similar way to what is sometimes seen in other beasts of prey, he seems to have undergone that queer change of feeling, that instead of regarding you as something to be devoured, he has come to feel all the dispositions of a friend. *Myself* I fear he regards still in the old natural relation, for latterly he has once and again bitten, and with no gentle and playful use of the fangs. Some notion of the ferocity and violence, and of the painful, and costly, and tedious, process of cure (if *ever* cured), may be formed from the naming of such things as—Brunck's Sophocles, Burmann's Ovid, Milton's book, Schleusner's Lexicon (the new 4to edit.), Lizards's Anatomy, not to mention a number of minor things. I hesitated and demurred, wished myself a hundred leagues out of the way of the temptation, was self-admonished and self-reproached, but—but—the two fine classics might never offer themselves so favourably again—of the 4to, Schleusner, there were but few copies (professedly) printed, and the larger type was *very* desirable; Milton's book was expressly bespoke before the scandalous exorbitance of the price was known, or could be anticipated; and *Lizards*—I was for the moment just simply insane, from the pleasure of having just got out of the Glasgow job, and thinking what a considerable (to *me* considerable) handful of pence I should get for having done it. But verily, I not only *mean* to sin no more at any such rate, or anything approaching to it, but *believe* I never shall. Literally my blood is kept warm by my being mad every day, ten times a day, to see the costly and (to me) useless piles and ranges of them about this room; to think what money has thus, for twenty years, been swallowed in an unproductive substance, in many parts of it now vastly depreciated; in the finer articles of it constantly subject to injury from damp and sundry other causes; the whole destined, one of these days, to the auctioneer's hammer, with a vast loss; and the whole foolish process of accumulation having actually and literally kept me, all the time in a difficulty, not seldom a hard one,

of "*making both ends meet*." This last evil has, sometimes, been so sensible, that if my good wife were not the most indulgent woman, about, in England, I should have heard lectures, many and long, and pronounced in no middle-voice emphasis. Besides all which, it has a thousand times occurred to me, with no gentle reproach of conscience, how much good, absolute and certain, and of the best kinds, might have been done by the expenditure, in charity, of but a minor part of what a rigid domestic economy has left it just possible to divert to the useless operation of amassing never-to-be-read books. My dear sir, I have gone into this mortifying self-exposure with an honest wish to warn you against such folly. We have often made smart pleasantry of the subject—but really and truly I am this time quite serious and in earnest to warn you of the danger, and against the *guilt*; for *that* I feel to be the right word in my own case. A man of very narrow means, as mine have always been (contrary to what I have heard, is sometimes reputed), has no *moral right* to indulge so expensive a taste. *Taste*, I have said; for with me it has never been, in the smallest degree, vanity or ostentation, nor any passion or fancy for *making a library*, but merely the attraction, individually and in detail, of one fine or valuable book, and then another.*

About the *Glasgow job* I have not heard or seen one word since I sent, some month or six weeks since, the concluding pages of MS. . . . Whenever it comes to my hands I shall be afraid to look into it, from the strong impression I have in its disfavour; it having been *all* written *invitâ Minervâ* (as was once the phrase), and the sight of the

* "In recollection of your having been on the point of telling — about a twelve guinea book in connexion with such a poor fellow as I am, I meant and forgot, particularly to request you not to say any word in his hearing about such a bad story. Such a thing would give him (and *any* one who does not understand the operation of the book-collecting malady) the impression that I must be either *rich* or *stark mad*. The *latter* is just the plain truth but one does not want it to be *proclaimed*, especially in the careless dashing manner in which he might happen to mention it. But perhaps about as probable an interpretation might be, that I have *plenty of money*, which is sadly untrue. My book-buying, year after year, has been the imprudence of a poor man, instead of the liberal indulgence of a rich one. It has put me in downright straits, a hundred times over—and two hundred to that."—*Mr. Foster to the Rev. W. Anderson.*

proof sheets not having at all brightened my previous estimate. It was a doleful sojourn in an indefinite region of common-place.

CXXX. TO MRS. HANNAH MORE.

Stapleton, near Bristol.

DEAR MADAM,—I should never have thought of such a thing as requesting your acceptance of a new copy of an old and common book, on account of the piece prefixed to this edition of it, had not Mr. Cottle told me, that such a liberty had been taken by the writers of some of the essays accompanying the late reprints at Glasgow, of a number of other old books.

I am aware that the vast accumulation on your premises, of the productions of contemporary book-makers, must have suggested to you the idea of the comfortable provision you will have, of materials for lighting your fires, in case of any scarcity of chips or shavings. But on the supposition that you will order them to be taken for that use in the *order of time*, that is, of *their dates*, I may venture to calculate on a considerable term of exemption for this volume; and may even hope for it an extension of that term by way of special favour, on account of so minor a part of it being the work of any other than the excellent Doddridge.

If I could be confident on reckoning on any decay of memory in such a veteran, I should not be doing wisely in taking this opportunity of recalling to your recollection, by confessing my sins against, I must not say courtesy, but even all civility, propriety, and decorum; in having received, in former years, presents of copies of several of your own valuable works, without returning so much as a line of acknowledgment. I wish I could find any better extenuation than to say, that in each instance I really did feel grateful, and very greatly flattered; that I intended writing soon to say so; that a sad habit of procrastinating all things, deferred it till I became ashamed to write at all; and that then I said to myself in excuse, Mrs. More is necessarily quite certain, without being told it, that I, with every intelligent reader of her works, hold them and their author in

high respect and admiration, and will be sure that I value as I ought, these personal tokens of her friendly remembrance.

There occurred one circumstance, now many years past, which would have seemed to render it indispensable on *my own* account, however otherwise superfluous to you, to convey to you some brief, but strong expression, of my high and invariable respect, if I had not become informed, that a suspicion, excited in your mind against me, had been obviated; I am referring to what you may have probably dismissed from your memory—the appearance of an unaccountably captious article in the *Eclectic Review*. No one could be more surprised and displeased at that article than myself; and I am confident, that from no quarter did the editor receive a more speedy and indignant reprehension.

In common with all the true friends of religion and the improvement of the age, I am gratified to think to what an extraordinary length the sovereign Disposer of our allotment on earth has protracted your life and eminent usefulness. It is very pleasing to hear, that you have experienced a considerable alleviation of infirmity and illness. Deeply grateful as you must be, for having been appointed so long to prosecute, with success, so important an employment, you will wait, with calm acquiescence and cheerful anticipation, the hour when the great Master shall call his servant to his presence and her eternal reward. I am, dear madam,

With the highest respect and regard,

Your friend and servant,

J. FOSTER.

CXXXI. TO B. STOKES, ESQ.

Stapleton, January 3, 1826.

. . . Another thing has occurred to me, before I could write two lines, namely, that since I was with you, you will have had very different concerns on your hands from any little matters of manuscripts and books, that is, the frightful disorder and crash in the commercial and financial system. It is quite dreadful to hear of the extent and depth of the disaster from every side. And it is too much

to hope that you will not, in spite of the general caution and safety of your management, have incurred some portion of a mischief so widely spread, and affecting every place. All I can venture to hope is, that your share may be comparatively small, even among those Welsh, whose banks (a number of them) will have been swept down by the torrent. It is truly a wretched state of things to have been suddenly fallen into by a nation which was beginning to exult in its returning prosperity, which was boasted of by its governors as surpassing almost all former example.—But that such a catastrophe *could* take place proves the prodigious rottenness of the system,—and that some such event was really quite *necessary* to happen, to prevent the concealed mischief from becoming wider and more pernicious still. As to the country banks especially, it has long struck the apprehension of every man of sense, that their endless multiplication, without check or known limits to their issue, was a most flagrant mischief to the community; not only as putting property every where in hazard, but as continually affecting and falsifying the very *standard of value* throughout the nation.—At a heavy cost a great ultimate benefit will have been gained by the breaking up of this vile system, and by the discredit and intimidation which will, for a long time, prevent the possibility of its renewal to any thing approaching to the same iniquitous extent.

CCXXII. TO THE REV. JOSIAH HILL.

Stapleton, March 22, 1826.

MY DEAR SIR,—It is most distressing to hear what James has suffered, and to think what it is too probable he is suffering still. And I can in a measure, but truly a very imperfect one, conceive what Mrs. Hill and you must have suffered, in apprehension, and in the most painful sympathy. How little (it has often occurred to my thoughts) was so melancholy a dispensation anticipated in the lively and delightful days and weeks which I spent with your family at Little Haven, with James as one of the most animated and animating spirits in the society! while every hope, of both his affectionate relatives and his admiring friend, calculated

on him as rising up, with the finest endowments, to be an enlightened and estimable man, and to act a valuable and honourable part in this mortal life. And most unwilling am I to admit the feeling that the saying this is an implication that such hope is to be surrendered. I still remember there is *One* with whom "all things are possible."—And at the same time, you, my dear sir, and my dear and most excellent friend, Mrs. Hill, have the most firm and assured belief that this Almighty and infinitely beneficent Power will do all things right. If it should be the heavenly Father's good pleasure that you are thus prematurely to lose the object of so much affection and fond anticipation, you know he has such reasons for it, that if they could be fully and intelligibly revealed to you, you would say, with cordial acquiescence, "It is well; thy will be done!" You *know* that this is so. Think what an inestimable blessing it is, in affliction, to know this for an absolute truth,—to know, that if you could have God's own wisdom to judge of the entire case, you would will exactly what he, in the issue of his present dispensation, will manifest that he has willed. . . .

It is consolatory to hear that under his long and severe sufferings he has displayed a submission and patience worthy of one who knows he is in the hands of a wise and merciful Disposer. I hope he will receive every consolatory aid, to sustain him through whatever that sovereign Disposer has appointed yet to await him: and I pray, and confidently trust in the Divine mercy, that this most painful discipline may be made most salutary, infinitely so, to the immortal spirit, whether the Lord of life and death has determined to restore him to health, or to call him to his presence. I would be most affectionately remembered to him, with every expression of the kindest sympathy, and every wish for his welfare. How little, alas! can all such expressions do to alleviate affliction like his! but I pray that he may enjoy the favour of Him who can alleviate all suffering and sorrow, and turn them into a cause of joy, here and hereafter. I can only wish you and Mrs. Hill the support and blessing of the same almighty Friend,—a resource of which you know by experience the value. I would be most kindly remembered to my friend Catherine, and to our friend John when you write to him. My good

wife wishes me to express her most friendly sympathy and kindest regards. Our boy is still in a delicate, precarious state, but rather a little, we hope, mending. I cannot urge you to write to me, in the midst of so much care, and with all your diversified public business also pressing on your time; you know what a welcome thing it will be to hear from you, whenever you *can* divert a little time and composure to such an occupation.

Yours, with the greatest regard,
J. FOSTER.

CXXXIII. TO THE REV. JOSIAH HILL.

Stapleton, May, 1826.

I will presume there is no need of professions,—to the effect that,—“this long silence has in no degree partaken of forgetfulness, indifference,” &c., no; it has been owing to a paralytic affection of my right hand,—an affection, however, which I never feel but when I should take, or attempt to take, a pen. In such case there is some mysterious arrest on its power; but lay down or let alone the pen, and I should not be sensible that any thing at all ails the limb. There are, nevertheless, rare and unaccountable intervals of this peculiar disorder; and I seize one of them to make an essay at this sheet.

The information respecting friend James has been, on the whole, more favourable than previous accounts had led me to fear the sequel was to prove. And I am indulging an assurance that the advancing fine season is every week bringing some small, but valuable and promising addition to his recovery toward health. Nothing, at the same time, but such a fatality as I have been lamenting would have prevented me from long since writing for information, and in acknowledgment of your last friendly, brief communication, as well as the preceding one. The envelope of the newspaper was legible but in part. I could make out that you still felt great anxiety respecting James; and it so happened that some lines on the topic of laudations conferred on a certain “Essay,” were as clearly visible as ever was Ballantyne’s typography,—just as if an evil spirit had taken the trouble to preserve conspicuously the sentence

adapted to cherish in me the evil principle of vanity. To be praised by "Heads of Houses," by college tutors, and by poets!—do you not think it was worth while to take some pains in finishing the composition,—that care of elaboration on which you have sometimes condescended to confer your rather scornful compassion? As a set-off, however, to such fume of Arabia, there has not been, as far as I am aware (with the single exception of old friend the Eclectic), one word of notice in any of the hundred printed vehicles of contemporary criticism. You will believe me, I hope, that I have no manner of quarrel with any of them on this account. I am about beginning to try whether I can do another small piece of work for the same employers. They fancy that I have been at it for a considerable time; and I have been too much ashamed of my dilatoriness to undeceive them. . . .

I should like vastly to know the whole in and out of your Liverpool station; I mean as to how it accommodates itself to the dispositions, habits, tastes, and likings of Mr. and Mrs. Hill. I have noticed how very taciturn you are on this whole subject. And my faith or presumption in the matter is inclined to coincide with that of some of your Bristol friends; that is to say, that Mr. and Mrs. H. do not like Liverpool at all. They (the Bristol friends) are beginning (or they pretend so) to be looking forward toward the time when the solemn and inviolable laws of the "Celestial Empire" (for the Methodists are the Chinese of the Christian tribes) will permit our old friends to take the other turn in the Bristol station. It is unfortunate that you cannot come just at this juncture to preserve the perfect *integrity* of this province of that empire,—to prevent some threatened desertions across its sacred confine, perpetrated under the influence of the attraction of Broadmead. Mr. —, I am told, is renegade. . . . Mrs. — told me lately that, much as she is sorry and reluctant to act in contravention to her worthy husband's will, she shall often be a defaulter in ecclesiastical allegiance. . . . Hall appears to be highly satisfied, and even gratified, with his transfer. By degrees one has come to understand the combination of motives which determined him; no one of them being singly very strong, but the whole together

rationally competent to account for and justify the measure, Excepting two or three Sundays occupied in preaching, I have heard him each Sunday evening, the evening being, I understand, generally the superior part of the day. And certainly, whatever it be in point of religious profit, it is a high intellectual luxury; though under a material deduction on account of the difficulty of hearing^a him. Besides the lowness and thickness of his voice, he does, I am sure, and many say the same, articulate more indistinctly than formerly. . . . The place is kept full (often *not* violently crowded), by a very miscellaneous, and partly occasional influx from the Church, Methodists, Quakers, Independents, and No Kind. A few Socinians to complete the compost. Several clergymen regularly; lately an Archbishop; members of Parliament over from the spiritual sojourn at Bath;—and so forth. (As to the *Archbishop*, I should affix the epithet *Irish*, or you will not believe me.) Hall takes possession this week of his house; one of a great number of newly built ones on the road half a mile on this side Bristol: which house is, during the morning part of the day, to be defended against assault by (if found necessary) culverins, carronades, chevaux de frise, bull-dogs, and what not. But I predict, that there will not be found wanting British valour enough, not unfrequently to dare and overcome all these means and modes of fortification and menace. . . . Anderson (on easy terms with Hall for many years) will be far more of an intimate with him than any other man. He is a vastly acute and doggedly intellectual fellow, that Anderson, and is intrepid enough not to have the slightest fear of the great man. I stand greatly in awe of him; but shall sometimes venture within reach of his talons,—which are certainly of the royal tiger kind. . . . He seems on the whole (for he has not escaped feelings of approaching infirmity, in addition to his old and invincible complaint), in a state of health to promise many years; years, it may be hoped, of great and peculiar usefulness,—peculiar, inasmuch as he will draw under his influence a large portion of the most intelligent part of the people about the place, especially of the class of young, inquisitive, educated folk, many of them apt to be vain or proud of their attainments, and liable to temptation on the side of Socinianism or scepticism. . . .

CXXXIV. TO THE REV. JOSIAH HILL.

August 2, 1826.

At last I put an end to this procrastination, for which it is of no use to say that I am sorry and ashamed. Nor would I pretend the smallest excuse from the circumstance of having been for a month past, and more, severely tasked with compulsory labour, for a temporary purpose, since a few sentences would have expressed my deep and sympathizing interest in your sorrows. But in truth I have wanted resolution. I have felt how impotent must be all testimonies of friendly concern in so mournful a juncture. I knew that the Divine Friend alone can be an effectual consoler,—and *his* consolations I rejoiced in the certainty that you enjoyed, and would still further enjoy.

About, I think, a month since Mrs. F—— kindly sent me a letter she had received from Mrs. Hill, which contained a most friendly reference to me. It was affecting to contemplate that bright and interesting youth in the state of debility, prostration, and suffering which she described. But how much I rejoiced,—and with feelings of congratulation to his affectionate and sorrowing parents,—at another part of [the letter] in which his piety, his patience, his entire resignation. . . . were so delightfully displayed! What inestimable consolation to his affectionate friends! The letter showed his exhaustion to be so extreme, that I anticipated his almost immediate dismissal from the scene of suffering, and felt some surprise at your letter which informed me he was still detained. And I was exceedingly struck with the memorable circumstance of his pointed and solemn appeal and questions to his brother. Such an explicit manifestation, such a prominence of Christian principle and faithfulness, was worthy of a spirit just ready for its flight into eternity—into heaven.—At the same time, it could not but be a pensive gratification to me, that any of my writing should be implicated with this impulse of pious avowal, and zeal, and fraternal affection. You requested me to write. My dear sir, pardon me that I delayed, till the second letter, with a black seal, brought the evidence, that all your feelings would be for a while sacred to the dead and to Heaven.

I seem as if I could hardly believe it for a fact, that my

animated young friend will be seen no more on earth. If I were at Little Haven, every spot would give back his image to my mind; with a frequent return of the suggestion, "Will he not come? Why is he not here?" I can imagine there would at moments be something almost like a prompting impulse to go and look for him, along the shore, or on the brow of the cliff. How vivid is my remembrance—it looks not like remembrance, but *presence*—of his elastic spirit, his illuminated look, his keen argument!—in all which we seemed to foresee, in more advanced future years, a man of extraordinary and admirable intelligence, conspicuously superior to surrounding society, and as we hoped, destined to be, somewhere or other, its light and benefactor. But the great Sovereign of the world had a different appointment! And he who was your interesting associate, and so often mine, is now in the invisible world, and among the spirits of the just made perfect. But this was a wise and gracious appointment. You are sure [of that] amidst all the regrets which oppress your hearts, and for the present cast a shade over the whole scene of Life. *He* who cannot err, and who could have bid him stay on earth, judged it *better* to say to him, "Come up hither." And how happy that the youthful spirit was willing and prepared to go! And think how delightfully, how divinely complacent he is in the change! Assuredly, if he might *return*, he would say, with heavenly emotion, "No, my heavenly Father, no; not from thy presence, for all the world below." But you will feel irresistible assurance that he thinks of you still, with sweet and never-dying affection, and anticipates the time when you will go to meet him, where you will never more lose him.

In Mrs. Hill's letter, it was extremely gratifying to see the pious resignation with which she was enabled to surrender to the Almighty the dear departing youth. I have often admired the calm fortitude of so gentle a spirit, and have thought how much cause she had to bless God for the possession of the supporting power of religion. That power I trust you will both effectually feel in this trying season. And also that every consoling, and every salutary and instructive, influence will be granted to operate on the minds of my young friends, John and Catherine. They

have, perhaps, never before had placed before them so plain and affecting a practical demonstration of the necessity, and sacred efficacy of religion.

. . . . With respect to your very kind invitation to Little Haven, I will just mention the state of the case. On account chiefly of John's health, my dear wife has been with him and the two younger at Lyme, on the south coast, this six or seven weeks, and I have never seen them all the while. . . . For more than a month I have been in hard labour in writing a great deal, in various shapes, about our academy,—in the way of statements and applications sent to various quarters to promote its interests, &c.,—so that a number of other matters of labour have been thrown into grievous arrear, and require to be now attended to.—Happily my wife's sister C. is with them,—or it would have been imperative on me to visit them; for the situation of things is but a mournful one. In one word, we have little reason to expect any other than a fatal termination of John's long indisposition. It is decidedly consumption, and he is reduced to very great debility and emaciation, and has an ominous cough. He has been gradually growing worse during the last half year. My dear wife is a woman of the most pensive feelings, though with all the fortitude of reason, aided by religious thought. But I fear for her oppressed spirits. Now, my dear sir, the case being so, I feel that if I *can* leave home a week or two, it is to Lyme that I ought to go. They would feel there the claim, while regarding you with the very highest esteem, and taking, as my wife does a very warm and sympathetic interest in your sorrows and loss. . . .

CCXXV. TO THE REV. W. ANDERSON.

1826.

MY DEAR SIR,—I was pleased to hear you say that you had not a Tacitus, of such an edition as to content you; but vexed afterwards that I should then and there have said one syllable of intimation that you did not need to purchase one,—as being sensible, the next moment, it might look so much like an air of having such affluence of

books as to be able to turn them to the effect of *conferring favours and gratuities*. In very truth it was said from the momentary eager impulse to prevent your doing what you said you were intending, that is, to procure a Tacitus. The idea of the instant was, that you might be turning in at Strong's for that purpose the first time you should be going that way.

There needs not one word to be said about this second Brotier's edition, edited by himself, with some additions to what was in his quarto, and at the same time some omissions of what he thought less essential. Several years since (though previously possessed of Valpy's reprint), I was tempted by the known character and the beauty of this, together with the fairness of the copy. There was another inducement:—I anticipated the need of two good copies for the purpose of, probably, sometimes reading a book of Tacitus with the youth—who will soon read no more.—I do not wish to retain in view what would be the constant memorial of this vanity and fallacy of hope.

It was with a melancholy sentiment that I lately took upstairs and placed on the shelf a volume of Livy, a considerable part of which he had read with me during the earlier period of his fatal decline. I looked at the part bearing the marks of his having proceeded through it, and thought, with deep pensiveness,—“he will never more look on these pages, and sentences.”

The Tacitus, I observe, I have long since taken the pains to preserve fit for use without binding, by pasting thin boards on the sides, pasting a strip of strong cloth, and covering it, across each top and bottom, and writing the inscription on the back. I like extremely the *foreign* look of this sort of paper-outside.

It may sometime or other occur that a tolerable *Latin Dictionary* will be of opportune service to a student in the Academy, who may be ill able to afford the cost of the necessary books. Of three or four such I can well spare one, which you will please to make this use of whenever you may be aware of the proper occasion.

The Delphin Cæsar, too, as not furnishing any such help as to favour indolence, and as not being in any great degree incorrect, may in some instance or other be worth putting

in the hands of such a student—I observe I have *Livies'* neatly printed Horace, 12mo., but with no notes at all—if this should be a thing of any use, I can at any time put it in my pocket.—Yours truly,

J. FOSTER.

XXXVI. TO HIS SON.

[Written to him when at Lyme, about two months before his consumption ended in death on the 5th of Oct. 1826. J. F.]

MY DEAR JOHN,—For some weeks I have had the intention of writing you a letter, and have been afraid my so long omitting to do so would seem hardly kind. The prevention has been from a considerable quantity of other writing of a laboured and tedious kind, together with many calls into society which I could not well avoid. But I think of you every day and hour.

There has not been much hereabouts worth telling you, more than what I have mentioned in the successive letters to your mother; unless, indeed, it had been possible to convey the essence of the admirable sermons of Mr. Hall, which I have heard each Sunday evening. It is the regret of all hearers that the essence, so noble, should go off, and as it were expire and be lost, like incense dissipated in the air;—lost, that is to say, except as far as it is admitted and retained for salutary effect in the minds of some of those hearers. Whether it *be* so retained in any of them, is known only to themselves and the Omniscient Inspector.—Last Sunday evening, (the text being in Ecclesiastes,—“There is a *time* for every purpose,” &c.,) he made his conclusion, with extreme energy, in urging on young persons the absolute necessity of an instant, earnest attention to their highest interests, with perhaps *ten* repetitions of the question, “Is it too soon—?” followed, in each sentence, with the most cogent and solemn representation *why* it is *not* too soon. One could have wondered, while listening, how it was possible that any of the young persons present, of any thing approaching to mature years and understanding, could put aside, at the time, the force of the admonition, or go away and think no more of it. I

wonder, my dear John, what *you* would have thought, and how you would have felt, if you had been there. He enforced that in a season of *health* "it is time,"—that no time is to be lost;—with what augmented emphasis he might have added, that when health has given place to sickness, there is *then*, with still more pressing and invincible evidence, *no time to be lost*.

My imagination is often with you, and the little company, in your dwelling and its vicinity, which are so familiar to my mental view. The most conspicuous and favourite part, that is the *Cobb*, is now, I suppose, easily practicable as a little walk to any who are in possession of a little share of strength. At every thought of that, and of the more distant shore where the relics of unknown past ages so much abound, I am greatly sorry that you cannot repeat the little rambles thither which pleased you so much last year. I regret to think how painfully you must feel the difference, especially when you observe the two younger associates capable of their former activity and amusement. You have to exercise patience in being content with what you *can* enjoy of the scene, under the restriction of your present weakness, by sitting on the bench, floating sometimes, it seems, on the sea in a boat, and looking from the windows on the great expanse, with often a beautiful sky and horizon, a splendid sun-setting, and, some time since, the rising moon,—which last I never saw with a more beautiful and striking appearance than I remember once at Lyme.

It has been pleasing to hear of *any* degree of alleviation which you have seemed to feel of your disorder; and very glad should I have been to hear of a more decided amendment. It has been well, and to me at the same time wonderful, that the heat, oppressive to all that I have met with, except Dr. Marsham, has been so much attempered to your feelings. I would hope its continuance will be favourable to your regaining some little increase of strength against the season which the now sensibly shortening days are beginning to signify we must be again looking for. You have to acknowledge it as a favour of Providence, that you are thus permitted to have the trial of the best expedient that could be recommended for arresting the progress of

your disease ; together with such constant alleviating attentions, cares, and exemptions ; while an incomparably greater number who are suffering under such debility are at the same time in circumstances of hardship, deprivation, and want. Think of them, if you are sometimes tempted to murmur at your lot. But do not let your thoughts be confined to the consideration of health, and the means and wishes for its recovery. I would earnestly and affectionately press it upon you that there is a far superior concern requiring your attention. I have never written to you, I think, without reminding you of this. But in such former admonitions I was far from anticipating, that the time would come so soon, when suggestions of the most serious kind would acquire such new and, I may say, importunate, force of application, from an extremely critical state of your health. By your invariable silence on this subject, and apparent care to avoid being brought into communication respecting it, I have always been left, and I believe your mother also, much in the dark as to what place it has held in your thoughts. I have feared to urge it upon you with formal, grave, and frequent repetition, lest such admonition should become repulsive to you, and so have the effect of making you disinclined to think or read on the subject. And knowing how much religious instruction, direct and indirect, has mingled through the whole course of your education, and, being certain, therefore, that you must necessarily have much *information* on the subject, I have been willing to hope that you did sometimes think of it seriously though reluctant to speak of it. How *could* I, when you had so much knowledge, and when your mental faculties were advancing toward maturity,—how could I do otherwise than hope that you must be sensible what is the grand dictate of reason, of wisdom, of good sense ; and were secretly giving some real attention to the greatest concern of existence ? And if you did it in a measure when in health, I may surely hope that you do it still more seriously *now*. For, my dear John, you can hardly be unaware that your situation is exceedingly precarious, not only as to the recovery of health, but as to life itself. Your friends would not willingly, in your state of weakness and languor, distress you with presages ; but it is

proper you should be unequivocally apprised that the case is one of great danger; while it is a well-known fact that the disorder is peculiarly deceptive to the patients themselves, as to their anticipations of the issue.

What then, my dear boy, is your most evident, most demonstrative, duty and interest? Is there not an irresistible appeal to your reason and conscience? The voice of your Heavenly Father himself speaks to you. Surely you will not be inattentive to his admonitions and merciful invitations. Can the voice of the kindest human friend, or the voice from Heaven itself, express to you a kinder or wiser sentence, than that you should apply yourself with all earnestness to secure the true felicity,—the only real and substantial felicity on earth, supposing your life should be prolonged,—the supreme felicity of a better world, if the Sovereign Disposer has appointed that your life shall be short.

Do not allow your thoughts to recoil from the subject as too solemn, too gloomy a one. If it *were* the gloomiest in the world, if it were nothing *but* gloomy,—it is yet *absolutely necessary* to be admitted, and dwelt upon in all its importance. What would be *gained*, my dear John, and oh, what may be lost! by avoiding it, turning the thoughts from it, and trying not to look at it? Will the not thinking of it make it *cease* to be urgently and infinitely important? Will the declining to think of it secure the safety of the momentous interests involved in it?—By *why* should the subject be gloomy? Is it a sad and melancholy thing to seek earnestly the favour and beneficence of God? Is it a miserable employment to seek his pardoning mercy in the name of Jesus Christ? Is it a mournful exercise to seek to have the mind brought into the right state, in all respects, towards God, and religion, and futurity, and heaven? Can it be a gloomy thing to seek a deliverance from the very *gloom itself* which naturally accompanies our ideas of death, so that we should come to exult in the thought and anticipation of an endless life? If there *be* gloom in the subject, you plainly see there is no way to escape it but by either, on the one hand, hardening the mind to an invincible thoughtlessness, which leads to the most fatal consequences, or, on the other hand, a firm and pious resolution

fully to *meet* that gloominess, and seek the divine assistance to pass through it, to overcome it, and attain a state of hope and consolation.

This was done by James Hill, of whose decease your mother has perhaps informed you. He was just your own age, within some very few weeks; and a year or two since had the most flattering prospects of life and distinction before him. He was not *then* insensible to the claims of religion, but did not yield his attention to them in the degree that he subsequently felt, with the deepest conviction, that he ought to have done. But his protracted illness (a slow consumption) was a salutary discipline to bring him to the most earnest concern for his immortal welfare; he sought the divine mercy, believing in the many promises that none shall truly, humbly, and perseveringly, through Jesus Christ, seek it in vain. He obtained a happy confidence in that mercy, and was perfectly resigned to the sovereign will for life or death.

Do not, my dear John, doubt that your prayers also will be graciously heard. *We* shall not cease to pray for you;—but the great, the *indispensable* thing is, that you pray for *yourself*. It must be your *own* serious and persevering effort. And is it not a supremely valuable and happy resource? Think of being permitted and invited to make your petitions to the Almighty Father, the God of all grace! And think, deeply and deliberately, of your situation, in body and spirit, to judge what you have to request of him. Such reflection will show you plainly what is of infinitely the greatest importance to you. Make *that*, above all, the subject of a humble and hopeful importunity. Do so, my dear John; and then you will be happy, whether your life shall be prolonged, or prematurely brought to a conclusion.

Your affectionate father,

J. FOSTER.

CCCCVII. TO THE REV. JOSIAH HILL.

Stapleton, Aug. 29, 1826.

.... In one point I have a principle of consolation, real and I think surely rational, though indeed of a gloomy kind.

I may have alluded to it in some former letter. It is, that I constantly and systematically regard this world with such horror, as a place for the rising human beings to come into, that it is an emphatical satisfaction, I may say pleasure to me (except in a few cases of rare promise), to hear of their prematurely leaving it. I have innumerable times been amazed that parents should not, in this view, be greatly consoled in their loss. Let them look at this world!—with sin, temptations, snares of the devil, bad examples, seducing companions, disasters, vexations, dishonours, and afflictions, all over it; and their children to enter the scene with a radically corrupt nature, adapted to receive the mischief of all its worst influences and impressions;—let them look at all this, and then say, deliberately, whether it be not well that their children are saved these dreadful dangers! Let them behold what the *vast majority* of children *do* actually become—*have* actually become, in mature life;—many of them, millions of them! decidedly bad and wretched, and causes of what is bad and wretched around them; and,—short of this worst event,—an *immense* majority of them careless of religion, salvation, eternity! I repeat, let them look at all this,—and then ask themselves whether it be not a vain presumption that exactly *their* children, nay, *every* parent in his turn, *my* children, are sure to be exceptions. Alas! how many even *pious* parents have cause (humanly speaking) to wish their children had never been born, or that they had died in their infancy! How often are they doomed to the sadness of seeing that the effect of all their cares of teaching and discipline, all they have done to warn and fortify them, is lost and destroyed in one short year, or even *month*, under the influence of the bad companionship, or the unfortunate situations, into which they fall. Supposing such a consequence could, in the infancy of such children, have been foreseen as probable, except prevented by a premature death, how absurd would have been the very affection of the parents which would have preferred their children's living for such a fearful hazard, to their being removed to eternal safety in their childhood or early youth! The exception to this state of the account is where, at a very early age, there are the most decided evidences of piety (if the parents are firmly persuaded that real piety once kindled in the soul will never be suffered to be ex-

tinguished), and especially when this piety is associated with such mental powers as to promise *eminent* excellence and usefulness. But in some instances, *this piety itself seems to be created under the instrumentality of sickness and impending death*. So that the affectionate parent seems to hear a voice from heaven saying, You shall not see your beloved child a child of God, *but at the cost of losing him*. The instance of Mrs. Saunders's daughter cannot but be fresh in my memory. And I believe that most pious and affectionately devoted mother, amidst the deep and pensive regrets of memory, does sometimes, nay, very often, feel *exultation in the loss* of her rare and admirable child. As if she should say, "I have lost her; but through the very dispensation by which she was taken away, she became that which I shall one day feel inexpressible joy to meet again. By *such* a loss how much I have gained which (humanly speaking) I might not have gained, BUT at the cost of losing her."—And that, dear James, so bright and interesting, the object of so many hopes, so admirably vigorous and premature in intellect,—was not he in a measure an example under the same predicament? Was not the decided piety which brightened the termination of his life and is so blessed a consolation to you in the mournful deprivation—was not this piety a star which rose in the darkness of his long affliction? He was to become decidedly devoted to God,—and then he was to die for it! But *so* to have died, is better than to have advanced forward into life in an undetermined state of mind with respect to the supreme concern of life, to be thrown into all the temptations of the world, without the sovereign principle fixed in the soul. It is not that I am in the least doubting that James had serious thoughts and conscience of religion; but the decided, the absolute devotion to God,—was not *that* heavenly gift imparted during, and through the instrumental operation of, his sensible transition toward another world?

CCXXVIII. TO JOHN BULLAR, ESQ.

Stapleton, Sept. 20, 1826.

I am too well assured of your benevolence to doubt that you have sometimes a friendly recollection of your former

pupil, John. It is at his wish, quite spontaneously expressed, that I trouble you with a few lines.

. . . . A day or two since he asked me whether I had, at any time latterly, heard from you; and said it would be a satisfaction to him if I would write to you, to express his grateful remembrance and respect, and his regret for not having more fully, at all times, improved his advantages under your instruction, and for any cause of disapprobation and dissatisfaction which he had, in any instance, given you. —I felt it necessary to promise to do so; and trust you will feel that I have, in this his wish and request, an adequate apology for troubling you, amidst your many labours and cares, with this brief account of circumstances so interesting in our own little secluded family. I hesitate whether I have any right to say one word more. If I *had* a right, what I would say would be, that if, in any fraction of an hour, you could afford your friendly attention for writing two or three sentences, they would be, I know, very greatly acceptable to John. At the same time I would pointedly say, that this is nothing of the nature of a claim, and that we shall be not the less assured of your kind wishes, though your constant and laborious occupations prevent your doing it. . . .

CXXXIX. TO JOHN BULLAR, ESQ.

Stapleton, Oct. 9, 1826.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have to thank you in John's name and my own, for your very kind letter to him and me: it was very acceptable and gratifying to him; but he is now no longer a subject of advice and consolation.

About the time of his receiving that letter, the progress of his illness was apparently so slow, that it appeared probable he might still survive a number of weeks; and when, eight or nine days since, he rather suddenly became very sensibly worse, it was deemed to be some effect of indigestion, the stress of which might be transient; but it proved to be (according to what he since mentioned to have been at the time his own conviction) the final stage and acceleration of the malady. By the middle of last week his little remaining strength was evidently vanishing very fast, all

relish for any kind of food was gone, and he felt a sense of illness and insupportable weariness through his whole frame. But he uttered no word of murmur, but expressed his resignation to the divine disposal, yet with great anxiety that his severely tried patience might not fail: but he expressed an earnest desire for the hour of deliverance. On the Thursday forenoon he said to me, with a peculiar and affecting emphasis, "I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, and is not that far better?"

A friendly and religious physician, who was with him repeatedly that day, having given an inexplicit answer to his inquiry, how long it was probable he might live, he interrogated me with an earnest look and tone, as to what the physician might have said to myself after leaving the room; and was soothed by my telling him, that the time would certainly be very short. We did not, however, apprehend that the hour was quite so near at hand.

It was not, therefore, without some small degree of surprise, that, at seven or eight o'clock in the evening, we perceived it evident that he was sinking very fast. His three or four immediate relatives, the physician, and the old affectionate servants, were assembled in the room, and he spoke continuously for a considerable time, with apparently little difficulty of utterance, and with the most perfect composure and command of mind and language; addressing or adverting to each of us, expressing a grateful sense of the kindness he had experienced; his request to be forgiven anything in which he had ever been blameable towards any of us; his wish, that each one might receive one more religious admonition from his death; his trust that we shall all meet again in a happier world; and his hope in the divine mercy through Jesus Christ, that he was going to that happier world. There was some strange character of *dignity* in his manner and language, such as I had never seen him exemplify till this last illness, and especially in these last hours; so that I was, on subsequent reflection, reminded of what was said of I forget whom, that "nothing in his life ever became him so well as his going out of it."* At short intervals he spoke frequently during

* "I have spoke
With one that saw him die; who did report

the advancing hours, expressing his calm hope—his confidence, but with the pensive expression, several times, of a wish that he might have felt more animated and delightful emotions. "I want," he said, "that He would lift up the light of his countenance more clearly upon me." I said to him, that this was not *essential* to the solidity of the last consolations. The last complete sentence, I think, that he uttered was, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." He retained his consciousness and his ability to reply, with intelligent, significant monosyllables and signs, till within the last hour, in the latter part of which he fell asleep, and it was not certain that he ever really awaked. His final breath was distinctly perceptible, and was followed at an interval by a struggle of the oppressed lungs, to inhale once more; but I felt sure that this was only mechanical, and that he suffered no pain. . . . His suffering frame was, except in the face, exhausted and attenuated to a mere skeleton. In looking on the deserted countenance, through which mind and thought had so recently, but, as it were, a few minutes before, emanated, I felt what profound mystery there was in the change. What is it that is gone? What is it now? During the last stage of his illness (since his return from the sea), he has seemed a strangely different person from what he had been before; it has looked as if a latent, unsuspected character were developed. His former habitual, systematic, invincible reserve, seemed to have left him, and without any effort of his to overcome it. He would easily and freely talk on religion, himself, death, hereafter; subjects on which it was heretofore impossible, in any way, to draw him into communication; and, at the same time, with a degree of maturity and compass of thought, which I had never attributed to him. In truth, I have never, but in his very early years, and in this short concluding season, fairly had the means of *knowing* the nature and extent of the operations of his mind; that unfortunate and continual reserve having placed me and kept

That very frankly he confessed his treasons,
Implor'd your highness' pardon; and set forth
A deep repentance; *nothing in his life*
Became him like the leaving it."

MACBETH, Act I. Scene 4.

me in a state of estrangement often painful, and sometimes creating a displacency, which, I believe, has made me deficient in kindness to him. I was promising myself, that, as his mind advanced towards maturity, it would, at length, *come out* in a manner to produce a more free and satisfactory intercourse. I now deem it probable, that even before his long indisposition, or at least during the earlier stages of it, there was much more of the visiting of serious thoughts than there were the external signs of. At the same time I fully believe, that the real ultimate *prevalence* of such thoughts in his mind was caused, through a gracious influence of Heaven, by the augmenting illness, which gradually brought upon him the conviction, that his stay on earth was approaching to a close. I think it probable, that his mind must have been occupied with the most serious subjects even *before* he came to that decided conviction; for the state of his sentiments when he became communicative, about two months since, appeared to me such as must have been preceded by a process not very short.

Thus there is a termination of all the cares, solitudes, and apprehensive anticipations, concerning our son and your pupil. He is saved from entering on a scene of infinite corruptions, temptations, and grievances; and borne, I trust, to that happy region where he can no more sin, suffer, or die; safe, and pure, and happy for ever. In such a view and confidence, I am (and my wife too, though for the present more painfully affected) *more* than resigned to the dispensation; the consolation greatly exceeds the grief.

Indeed, I believe, that to me, the consolatory considerations have much less to combat with than in the case of parents in general. Probably I may before have expressed to you, that I have such a horror of this world, as a scene for young persons to be cast and hazarded into, that habitually, and with a strong and pointed sentiment, I congratulate children and young persons on being intercepted by death at the entrance into it, except in a few particular instances of extraordinary promise for piety, talent, and usefulness. . . . If, as in *our* case, parents see their children, in an early period of life, visited by a dispensation, which, *in one and the same act, raises them to piety and dooms them to die, so that they receive an immortal blessing at the price*

of death;—oh! methinks it is a cheap cost, both to them and to those who lose them! In one of my first conversations with John, on his irrecoverable situation, when I said, "We shall be very sorry to lose you, John," he calmly and affectionately replied, "You will not be sorry, if you have cause to believe that I am beyond all sorrow."

While I was writing the above yesterday, your kind letter came to hand. We are most truly grateful to you for the deep and friendly interest you have taken in John's welfare, and now take in our mourning for his departure. He *was* very cordially gratified by your letter, both for the kind personal regard, and the religious suggestions and consolations which it conveyed. I can perfectly enter into your feelings respecting the *dispersion of your children*. This has always appeared to me one of the most melancholy circumstances in life. In my own case, I have anticipated it as a grievous circumstance, on supposition I should live long enough to experience it. But I hope you will have the satisfaction of seeing and hearing that your children prosper in temporal interests; and God grant them and you, that they may, above all, prosper in the infinitely more important ones.

I am, my dear Sir, yours,
With the highest respect and esteem,
J. FOSTER.

OXL. TO MRS. SAUNDERS.

Stapleton, 1826.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Your very kind letter could not fail to be extremely welcome. Most truly, you have been taught to understand to the utmost, the feelings which are caused by such an event. But it has been granted to you to enjoy the most animating consolations; and we have to thank the Almighty that such consolations are granted *to us* also.

Though the final hour of the late dear youth did arrive considerably sooner than, some weeks since, we had expected, the event itself had, for four or five months, been regarded as inevitable. Before he went to the sea, at Midsummer, a judicious and pious physician (a relative of ours), plainly

signified that the symptoms were of the most decisive character; and that he advised the expedient rather because it might afterwards be a subject of painful reflection *not* to have tried it, than from any hope that this or any other means could be efficacious. He returned very evidently feeble, more emaciated, and suffering more than at the time he went. Had he stayed but a few days longer his return would have been impracticable, which would have been a distressing and melancholy circumstance. His decline was so sensibly progressive, that after a very short time he was confined entirely to his bed.

With a small exception of those slight faults (very slight in his case) so naturally incident to youth, his conduct had always been good. But we had remained painfully in doubt respecting that deeper interest of the soul. And a habitual reserve of character, beyond any instance I have ever known had always made it impossible to bring him to any satisfactory communication on the subject. Before his return from the coast, it was strongly intimated to him, rather than plainly and pointedly declared, that the malady was decidedly fatal. But even this which he received with perfect calmness, did not draw him into any disclosure of his silent thoughts. A short time after his return home, I felt it my painful duty, and reproached myself for having so long deferred it, to inform him in the most express terms with a view to the great subject of religion and eternity, that his life was infallibly drawing to a close. I shall never forget the delight, not unmingled with a degree of surprise, which was caused by his reply.

With the most entire calmness, and easy simplicity of manner, he said he had for a good while past been convinced in his own mind that he could not recover;—that his thoughts had been deeply exercised with his solemn prospects, and that he had a humble hope in the divine mercy. He talked with perfect freedom; his long and invincible reserve seemed to have left him all at once, without an effort; and it appeared as if a new or hitherto latent character was suddenly developed before me. He expressed a tranquil resignation to the divine disposal, and a willingness to yield up his life; only a wish that if it should so please God, there might be permitted him a little protraction of the remaining period for preparation; but this with

submission. Neither then, nor at any subsequent moment, did he betray any regret at his irrecoverable situation,—any clinging to life, or reluctance to surrender it.

Through the succeeding weeks his mind remained in the same peaceful state, while he was sensible that at the end of each few days his little feeble strength was still more diminished. And this peace was founded avowedly on the *merits of Christ alone*. His expressions of hope were sometimes mingled with self-condemning recollections of negligence and sin.

His decline was very gradual till within about a week of the end. He did not suffer all the distressing symptoms of the disease; but had enough for the exercise of patience, in laborious short breathing, cough, and oppressive debility and languor. These were greatly aggravated in the concluding week, and in the last few days he complained of an almost insupportable illness and weariness throughout his whole frame. But he never uttered a murmur at the severe discipline; fearfully solicitous, however, sometimes, lest his patience should fail under the trial. The last day but one he took great interest in a conversation respecting the probable manner of the future separate state of existence. His longing for the final deliverance became very earnest, especially in the last day; which we did not, however, at the beginning of it, by any means expect to be the last. . . .

About eight o'clock he was so evidently sinking fast, that we were drawn (four of us, and the two old faithful servants) into his room. He then spoke a considerable time continuously, with wonderful composure, and clearness of thought and language. . . . He was sensible till within the very last hour. When I thought his mind was finally withdrawn from us, and his eyes finally closed, I touched his face, and spoke to him, and he instantly looked up, and with evident intelligence spoke one word in reply; and a few moments after looking at his mother, he, in an affectionate tone, said, "Mamma!" the last word he uttered. A little afterwards he sank into sleep, and as far as could be discerned, passed from sleep into death; I believe without any sense of suffering. There was a perfectly distinct last breath, followed at an interval, by several ineffectual efforts of the oppressed lungs to inhale yet once more; but I felt

sure, from the perfect quietness of his countenance and his frame, that this was no more than a mechanical action of the subsiding principle of life.—We have seen his pale and insensible form now for the last time; for while I have been writing this account, the lid of the coffin has been fastened down.

The previous and commencing operations of religion on his mind can now never be certainly known in this world. But as in the case of that ever dear young friend (Sarah Saunders), the memory of whom can never fade,—so I believe in this instance too, that long illness, growing into a settled anticipation of approaching death, was made the instrumental discipline for bringing the soul effectually and decidedly to God. Thus our two dear young relatives had the noblest, best gift under the sun conferred upon them—at the cost of life! It was Heaven's gracious will that they should attain to the soul's true welfare—but they were to die for it! And, my dear madam, was not this a cheap cost of so divine an attainment? Could we for the world wish them back in a state of the most vigorous health, *but without that which they gained in the very process of losing it?* No! No! In beholding this world, overspread with all manner of evil, and thinking of the fearful hazard of young persons entering upon it, to pursue their course through it, what an animating consolation is it, to see *these two*, by a sovereign act of the Great Disposer, carried at once beyond the entire sphere of evil, and secured safe and happy for ever! * . . . My dear wife feels the full value of this consolation, while the separation more painfully affects, for the present, her extreme sensibility, rendered, as it is, more pensive and deep by habitual feeble health.

* "I believe that I am much more disposed to congratulate you on his account than to condole with you; at least, as the father of five sons, I feel that nothing could make me so happy for any of them, as to be satisfied that they were so loved by God, and so fashioned by his Spirit to a fitne for his kingdom, as is the case with your dear son Henry."—DR. ARNOLD to W. Balston, Esq., on the death of his son. *Arnold's Life and Correspondence*, Vol. II., p. 245.

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